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## WAR CRIME AND PUNISHMENT
What the United States Could Learn from the Milosevic Trial
*By Guy Lesser*

## MINE OF STONES
With and Without the Spirits Along Haiti's Cordon de l'Ouest
*By Madison Smartt Bell*

## ON EVIL
The Ragged Core of a Sweet Apple
*By William H. Gass*

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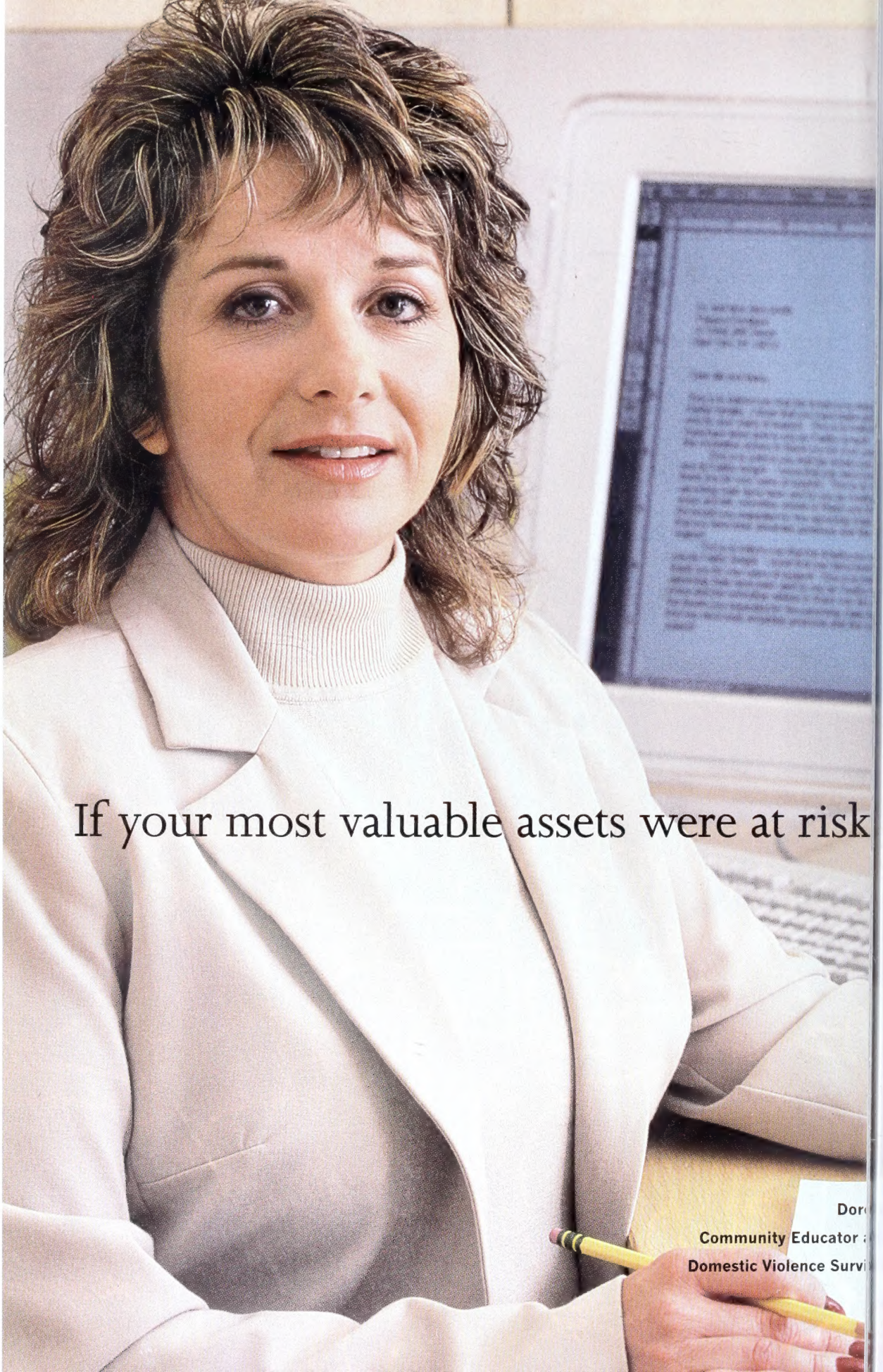
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*Cover:* Los papagayos *(detail), by Beatriz González*

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# LETTERS

## The View from Inside

We were aggrieved to read the biased, untrue, and sensationalistic "Sick on the Inside" by Wil S. Hylton [Report, August 2003]. As a physician, I know that many dedicated and talented men and women have chosen to make it their life's work to deliver beneficial and compassionate health care to incarcerated patients. Despite our repeated attempts, *Harper's Magazine* did not give Correctional Medical Services, Inc., any meaningful opportunity to correct misinformation published, or to present a fair picture of the vital work done by correctional health-care providers and CMS.

The story's depiction of specific patient cases, as well as overall care in the field of correctional medicine, portrays serious inaccuracies and does not reflect what the actual medical records show. Similarly, the story never disclosed to readers that the lawsuits filed by patients mentioned in the article were *dismissed*. The story was pointedly misleading. The explanation of the etiology and treatment of hepatitis C was wrong; the explanation of inmates' legal rights was wrong; and the portrayal of correctional health care today was wrong. Material facts were omitte which, if reported, would hav changed the story dramatically.

The story neglected to mentio any of the oversight agencies, mon tors, professional and academic r viewers, or inmate patients wh have been supportive of CMS an the correctional health-care profe sionals. In fact, *Harper's Magazi* actually rebuffed the Missouri D partment of Corrections' efforts provide factual information and outside perspective on CMS an these issues. Instead, the story reli on unnamed sources, detracto and individuals with undisclos personal agendas. Had *Harper Magazine* done a full or balanced r view of relevant information, likely would not have felt comfo able publishing the many basel statements in the story.

Hylton did not report the *m lions*, not hundreds or thousan but *millions*, of beneficial encou ters that have occurred between i mate patients and CMS employe and contracted health-care prof sionals. The story did not report any of the specialized accreditati organizations and correction health-care experts who ha worked over the past three deca to improve the field. The story d not report any of the extraordina programs, quality initiatives, a undertakings CMS proactively d veloped, implemented, and e hanced for the benefit of inma

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters,* Harper's Magazine, *666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

ients (e.g., chronic-care clinics, alth fairs, access to independent erts and current science and lit- ture, support of educational ndations and organizations that ance the skills and learning of rectional health-care profession- , to name just a few).

The vast majority of correctional alth-care professionals, like other dical professionals, are caring and ponsible. They show their dedica- n each and every day by going to rk in a prison or jail to serve their nate patients. In this day of med- l-professional shortages, nurses, ysicians, and other health-care rkers can choose just about any eer they want. Defamatory stories e this one deter and dissuade nest and altruistic men and wom- from wanting to serve in this crit- l endeavor.

We believe that magazines and iters unilaterally wield the power the press, and with that power nes the responsibility to use it fair- We had hoped that *Harper's agazine* would have afforded us ade- ate space in which to tell the alth-care providers' stories, since e publication provided so much ace to those who made disparaging d untruthful accusations. The men d women who dedicate their lives this calling deserve fair treatment, t as much as they did not deserve e attacks that were made in your ry. If readers are interested in un- rstanding the health-care providers' sponse to the allegations in your ry, they may access that informa- n at www.cmsstl.com/mediare- nse.htm.

*uis C. Tripoli, M.D.*
. Vice President of Medical Affairs rrectional Medical Services, Inc.
djunct Assistant Professor of Medi- cine
vision of Infectious Diseases ns Hopkins University School of Medicine

*il S. Hylton responds:*

As I reported in my article, the cts are that CMS absorbs half a bil- n dollars of taxpayer money every ar without bothering to account for that the company has a blanket




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policy of "not encouraging anyone to undergo therapy" for hepatitis C and refuses to screen inmates for the disease; that the company has consistently refused to reveal how many of its doctors have had their licenses revoked, or to provide doctors' names for outside verification; that the company has been accused by the Justice Department of failing to meet "any known professional standard"; that when Leland Hunley, an inmate who appeared in my story, was bitten by a spider, CMS removed his leg; that other inmates have died in CMS facilities from being given the wrong medicine; that the company is shielded by a battery of special legal obstacles, which make it nearly impossible for prisoners to sue them successfully; that CMS has repeatedly refused to conduct an interview with me about any of this, or to arrange interviews with any of their doctors, nurses, or the satisfied inmates they claim to know, choosing instead to gripe after publication that their point of view was not included; and finally, that in spite of Fleishman-Hillard, one of the world's largest public-relations firms, and a legion of lobbying groups at its command, the company is besieged not only by the "unilateral" press but also by the ACLU, Human Rights Watch, the Catholic Church, and, most recently, a Justice Department inquiry in the company's home state of Missouri, where the Missouri Department of Corrections (the same group that CMS calls "an outside perspective") has actually blocked the access of federal investigators to CMS facilities. I leave it to the reader's imagination as to why the Missouri Department of Corrections would be reluctant to allow oversight of their medical providers or, for that matter, why the same department of corrections placed an unsolicited call to our office, just as we were going to press, to sing the praises of their CMS colleagues.

In all of the carefully scripted correspondence that CMS has produced about my article so far (and there has been plenty), the company has not presented any evidence that the facts above are untrue, and it will take more than bluster and spin to change them.

## Huah Nation

"We're in the Army Now" [Essay, October 2003] reminded me of a passage in Bob Woodward's *Bush at War* that recounts President Bush at game three of the World Series, a month and a half after September 11:

> The president emerged wearing a New York Fire Department windbreaker. He raised his arm and gave a thumbs-up to the crowd on the third base side of the field. Probably 15,000 fans threw their arms in the air imitating the motion.
>
> He then threw a strike from the rubber, and the stadium erupted.
>
> Watching from owner George Steinbrenner's box, Karl Rove thought, It's like being at a Nazi rally.

As astonishing as the statement itself was, Woodward had nothing further to say on the subject. Fortunately, Kevin Baker did.

*Alan Howard*
New York City

Kevin Baker writes that George W. Bush "has not bothered to ask Congress to declare, officially, either of the two preemptive wars" the Republicans have launched since 9/11, and that he has "claimed unprecedented powers to use whatever military force he deems necessary, for as long as he wants." In fact, Congress has not issued a declaration of war since 1941, which did not prevent Harry Truman from ordering the invasion of Korea, John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson from sending soldiers to Vietnam, Ronald Reagan from invading Grenada, and Bush Sr. from deploying troops to Panama or initiating the first Gulf War. Perhaps the current president's invasions were misguided, even counterproductive, but they cannot be called unprecedented.

*George Goldberg*
Tucson, Ariz.

It is a shame that Kevin Baker dismisses the "activist left" as "preferring to retreat into the usual Chomsky-Zinn-Vidal dreamworld of outraged American innocence" when the political economy of Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Gore Vidal has little to do with "dreamworld" or "innocence." The activist left, embodied by organizations such as Voices in the Wilderness, Global Exchange, and Co-op America, has plenty of strategies for engaging "the world as it is." Baker's snide and helpless tone, meanwhile, is certainly appreciated by those on the right who work to militarize our society via demoralizing "perception management" efforts.

*Preston Enright*
Denver

I applaud Kevin Baker's critique of Bush's militarization of America but deplore his support for bringing back the draft or any other form of obligatory national service. We should favor liberty and freedom; the draft is the antithesis of freedom, and obligatory national service is incompatible with liberty.

*Kevin Cahill*
Albuquerque, N.Mex.

Kevin Baker's conclusion that "in the end, we'll beg for the coup," is anticlimactic. Led by the Bush Administration, the coup in the United States has already taken place. It was bloodless and sported the team jacket but was similarly murderous of the democratic process.

*Rob Colter*
Toronto

## Derrida Derided

An excerpt of my book *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* appeared several times distorted without my consent in *Harper's Magazine* ["The Consecration of Philosophy," Readings, October 2003]. The editors extracted a passage from my dialogue with Jacques Derrida on the meaning of global terrorism and 9/11, and selectively eliminated 335 words.

The most shocking example of this textual alteration occurs following Derrida's statement that 9/11 as a proper name "also marks something else." His subsequent reflection upon the inadequacy of current political discourse to do justice to

*Continued on page*

# NOTEBOOK

## Revised text

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*When it's a choice between writing the story and writing the myth, write the myth.*
—John Ford

During the week in early November when CBS canceled its broadcast of *The Reagans*, the gossip making the season's tour of the New York book-party circuit damned the network for stuffing a gag in the mouth of the First Amendment. The verdict was unanimous, announced by poets in Greenwich Village lofts, by publishers in offices overlooking Times Square, by novelists loose among the buffet tables at The Four Seasons and the Plaza Hotel. In every jurisdiction the finding was handed down with solemn turns of phrase: "dark night of fascism," "sad day for artistic freedom," "appalling cowardice."

No members of the literary jury had seen the four-hour movie that served on the occasion for their alarm, but then neither had the claque of self-appointed judges that forced CBS to remove the offending object from the display window of prime-time television. The complaints arose from rumors published in the *New York Times* on October 21, four weeks before the dramatization of Reagan's life and love story was scheduled to air. The producers were said to have intended a heartwarming biography—young actor rises to fame and fortune in Hollywood, finds God and an adoring wife, enters politics, moves upward to the White House, and saves the country from poverty and fools—but the screenwriters apparently had blotted their pages with a few careless lines of dialogue suggesting weevils in the ointment and flies in the milk. The first rumors—of scenes depicting Reagan as an intolerant homophobe guided by the wisdom of his wife's astrologer—were amplified by a second edition of rumors seeping into the Internet with the Drudge Reports of October 24 and 26—scenes depicting Reagan as a man who confused himself with the anti-Christ and Nancy as an angry dwarf screaming insults at the White House wine steward. It didn't matter that in the source materials the producers could show probable cause for the complications of character; nor did it matter that Reagan emerged at the end of four hours as an heroic president who restored America's faith in itself and won through to victory in the Cold War against the Russians. What mattered was the network's failure to deify Reagan. The man deserved an image made of gold; any hint of imperfection implied not only carelessness but also blasphemy.

The rumors of desecration were enough to summon from the Republican faithful a swarm of 80,000 outraged emails, the threat of boycott against automobile and soft-drink manufacturers associating their product with the movie, a demand from Ed Gillespie, chairman of the Republican National Committee, that the network submit the production to prior review by competent historians.

The thunder on the right was sufficient to its purpose, and on November 4, CBS canceled the broadcast of a drama on which it had spent $10 million, and had scheduled for Sweeps Week, during which the networks seek to attract their biggest audiences and highest ratings. The press release attributed the erasure to artistic integrity, a belated recognition on the part of the executive producers that *The Reagans* didn't meet the standard of "balanced portrayal" for which CBS was justly famous, the decision "based solely on our reaction to seeing the final film, not the controversy that erupted around a draft of the script."

None of the parties to the outcry credited the statement with even the semblance of truth. The friends of free speech in New York received it with scorn and derision; Ronald Reagan's champions in the suburbs of cyberspace accepted it as proof of the avarice and hypocrisy they always had known to be the earmark of the lying, liberal press. The CBS executives presumably didn't need to be reminded of their own Dan Rather's epitomization of network television as a natural-born toady. Rather had offered the analysis with reference to the false heroics of the reporting of the first American war against Iraq. Here in media fantasyland, he had said, "We begin to think less in terms of responsibility and integrity, which get you in trouble . . . and more in terms of power and money. . . . Suck-up coverage is in."

Suck-up coverage is always in, both in the print and the broadcast media, but if the disappearance of *The Reagans* would have come as no surprise to John Ford, the Hollywood director now best remembered for his mythological rendering of the old American West in the movie *Stagecoach*, it offered an instructive commentary on the revisions made over the last twenty years in the language of political correctness. Conceived in the universities in the early 1980s, the magical use of words was meant to empower what was then perceived as the disenfranchised left—women, gays, blacks, Latinos, environmentalists, any and all victims of circumstance. The speaking in euphemism, like the speaking in tongues in Pentecostal churches, supposedly conferred upon the devotees the mandate of Heaven. Teach people to talk

sweetly to one another, divide the curriculum into communities of uplifting sentiment (sexual and cultural as well as racial and sociological), and then surely, in the fullness of time and after many weavings of the sacred spells, they will learn to behave properly, to abandon the joys of date rape and haul down their Confederate flags, quit stealing from the poor to feed the rich, come to see and know that the true path to political happiness and constitutional redemption is to be found not with a compass or the 82nd Airborne Division but with a well-thumbed thesaurus.

The society's corporate managers needed twenty years to fully appreciate the nature of the gift they had been given. The jargons of safe speech struck them on first hearing as un-American and wrong, and they recruited several regiments of reactionary historians to wage what was billed as "the Culture War" against the barbarian hordes issuing forth from the English departments at Duke and Yale. The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* posted scouts on the perimeter of the defense budget to watch for feminists and deconstructionists; the neoconservative think tanks declared a state of emergency and set up assembly lines for the production of academic papers asserting that black people ask for nothing better than the comfort of continued failure; Rush Limbaugh faced down mobs of subversive adjectives; William Bennett sent up barrage balloons filled with helium and virtue.

The events of September 11, 2001, placed the doctrine of political correctness in a truer light and a clearer perspective. The distortions of language formerly regarded as the enemy of free expression stood revealed as the friend of Operation Enduring Freedom. With only slight adjustments in emphasis, the rinsed and blow-dried vocabulary proved better suited to the service of "power and money" than to the defense of "integrity and responsibility." The various commentaries on the omission of *The Reagans* in last November's *TV Guide* suggested notes toward a revised glossary.

1. APPROPRIATENESS The universities employed the word to guard underprivileged individuals against attacks on their emotional well-being. Nobody knew how to change women into men or black people into white people, but the least that anybody could do was to pretend otherwise. It wasn't appropriate to observe that the progenitors of Western civilization were for the most part European, male, and white; it wasn't appropriate to say that the entire body of literature assembled on the whole of the African continent doesn't match, either in quality or in volume, the achievement of the city of London; it wasn't appropriate to say that women tend not to be drawn to the study of mathematics or drafted into the secondary of the Chicago Bears. The polite lies were meant to bind up wounded sensibilities, not to burnish the images of state.

In the interest of the latter purpose, the objectors to the Reagan mini-series borrowed the rules of etiquette made to the measure of the former. It wasn't appropriate to speak poorly of a man afflicted with Alzheimer's disease, "a little tacky," according to *Newsweek*, "to be taking a lot of pot shots" at a president unable to come to a microphone, "in questionable taste," according to the *Washington Post*, "to schedule a controversial drama" apt to hurt the feelings of so many fine and loyal Americans. Whether the movie was improbably good or predictably bad mattered as little as a critical evaluation of Maya Angelou's poetry.

Deployed in the theaters of military operation, the polite uses of language allow our military spokespeople to conduct their briefings in the manner of English professors teaching a class in semantics. Nobody knows how to fight wars without killing people, but the least they can do is pretend otherwise. Thus Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, at a press conference in Baghdad on November 11, announcing the harsh disciplinary action (Operation Iron Hammer) soon to be meted out to Iraqi guerrillas: "Although the coalition can be benevolent, this is the same lethal instrument that removed the previous regime, and we will not hesitate to employ the appropriate levels of combat power."

None of the reporters attending the class inquired about the chance of casualties—military, civilian, or collateral. To do so would have been "inappropriate," for the same reasons that the Bush Administration deems it "inappropriate" to permit photographs of the flag draped coffins off-loaded on the ramps at Dover Air Force Base.

2. AUTHENTICITY By 1990 at many of the nation's right-thinking universities, the novels of Jane Austen and George Eliot had been remanded to the custody of the department of Women's Studies, the texts subject to exploration only by female professors of literature. A majority of the critics complaining about *The Reagans* followed a parallel line of argument in their opinion of its worthlessness. The actor James Brolin had been hired to play the part of the former president, and because Brolin is married to Barbra Streisand—notorious liberal, friend to Bill Clinton, hater of Republicans—Brolin clearly came to the set with vicious intent. How could it not be so? The man was marked by the company he kept, and "what cruelty must lie in the hearts of CBS executives" to sign a Communist on the Gipper's horse?

3. HATE SPEECH An all-purpose synonym for bigotry, favored by college deans in the 1980s as a caution against ugly insults directed at a student's sexual or racial orientation. The phrase lately has come into more general usage as a restraining order on expressions of disagreement with American foreign policy. The Pentagon's cadre of high-ranking geopolitical strategists consists largely of fierce and vision ideologues who advocate the social and political restructuring of the entire Middle East—Islamic militancy suppressed, Arab nationalism uprooted, Palestinian radicalism destroyed. They make little distinction between the objectives of the Bush Administration in Washington and the Sharon government in Jerusalem, but requests for further clarification invite the charge of anti-Semitism. Jews who ask questions find themselves modified by the adjective "self-hating." When George Soros on November 5 informed an audience of Jewish philanthropists in New York that in Europe "there is a resurgence of anti-Semitism" and that the policies of the Bush Administration "contribute to that," his remarks were denounced, within a matter of days, by Congressman Eliot Engel

Y.) as "ridiculous and outrageous," orally reprehensible."

5. RACISM Let it once be established it prejudice is an evil with a thousand es and as many names (the bias ainst fat people or Yorkshire terriers small-minded and contemptible as e bias against black people or para-ets), and there's no end of the ser-es that the word can be made to form. The intelligentsia on the Re-blican right picked up on the possi-ities during the first term of the Clin-n Administration, developing the eory of rich, white men as an op-essed minority suffering under the h of federal tax policy and Michael oore's jokes. The election of George sh brought them out of the closet. aving come to see their selfishness as orm of ethnic identity too long sub-erged by an alien culture insensitive the humiliation of a Wednesday thout oysters or a Sunday without lf, they have found in Grover orquist, president of Americans for x Reform, their own Martin Luther ng, leading them out of darkness, iking off their chains. Not a man aid to speak out against social in-stice, Norquist entered the plea of cism on October 2, in a conversa-n with Terry Gross on the Nation-Public Radio program *Fresh Air*. mparing the cadre of wealthy Amer-ns to the victims of the Holocaust, orquist said,

> The morality that says it's okay to do something to a group because they're a small percentage of the population is the morality that says that the Holocaust is okay because they didn't target everybody, just a small percentage.... Arguing that it's okay to loot some group because it's them, or kill some group because it's them, and because it's a small number—that has no place in a democratic society.

6. CULTURAL HERITAGE Some cul-res discover their identity in clouds the humming of bees; other cultures d coherence in metaphysics, their ditions shaped by the five hundred ords for snow or the ninety-nine mes of God. Our own culture dances the music of its guns. Warfaring ople, unique in our gift for violence, r best-loved myth is the one about the going west with the rules of forward deterrence and preemptive strike, killing anything and everything (the buffalo and the Indian, the beaver, the top soil, the passenger pigeon, and the Mexican) standing in the way of progress on the long and lonesome trail to Rancho del Cielo.

For too many years we have denied our heritage, been made to feel embarrassed by the bombings of Hiroshima and Dresden, forgotten that the Republican Party won the Civil War, shied away from the wisdom of William Tecumseh Sherman, who knew and said that "we must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women, and children."

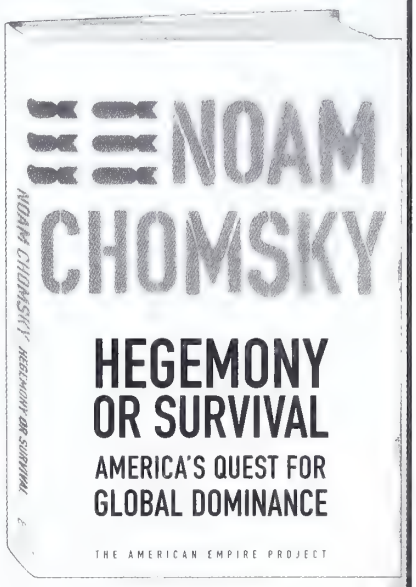
Fortunately we have the war in Iraq to recall us to a sense of who we are; fortunately we have not only President George W. Bush but also the *New York Times* columnist David Brooks to set the proper tone. Thus Brooks on November 4, saying that true Americans don't flinch in the face of death appropriately administered to people whom we neither see nor know:

> What will happen to the national mood when the news programs start broadcasting images of the brutal measures our own troops will have to adopt? Inevitably, there will be atrocities that will cause many good-hearted people to defect from the cause.... The President will have to remind us that we live in a fallen world, that we have to take morally hazardous action if we are to defeat the killers who confront us. It is our responsibility to not walk away.

The accommodating moralist reconfigures the code of etiquette, which once forbade the wounding with injurious words, to excuse the committing of inevitable atrocities; the objection to "brutal measures" is reperceived as an action "morally hazardous." The revisions should come as no surprise. The labels of political correctness never were intended to convey meaning; analogous to a notary's stamp, they were meant to certify the transfers of jurisdiction and propriety, instruments of power instead of thought. The freedoms of expression prove contingent upon the circumstances, the instruction on the labels changed to match the preferences in virtual reality. ■


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# HARPER'S INDEX

Ratio of the number of words in the last State of the Union address to those in George Washington's first : 5:1
Number of press conferences at which President Bush has referred to a question as a "trick" : 11
Number of *New York Times* articles about Pfc. Jessica Lynch that were written by Jayson Blair : 7
Factor by which a U.S. Gulf War veteran is more likely to develop Lou Gehrig's disease than an average American : 2
Reward offered by the U.S. military to any Iraqi who turns in a hand-held launcher and missile : $500
Amount such a weapon can reportedly fetch on the international black market : $5,000
Number of states enrolled in the Justice Department's Multistate Anti-Terrorism Exchange, or MATRIX, in 2002 : 13
Number that have since dropped out or refused to provide DMV records : 5
Months after a data firm was hired to run MATRIX that its CEO resigned, admitting to past drug smuggling : 18
Estimated percentage of Afghanistan's GDP last year accounted for by opium exports : 39
Ratio of the U.S. spending on Iraq approved last November to total AIDS spending in developing countries last year : 18:1
Percentage of new HIV infections worldwide accounted for by people under the age of 25 : 58
Percentage of Americans who say they would prefer a universal health-care system to the current one : 62
Percentage of Americans between the ages of 15 and 22 who favor abortion restrictions : 44
Percentage of Americans over the age of 27 who do : 34
Estimated number of times a one-year-old was bitten by his peers at a Croatian day-care center one morning last fall : 30
Percentage change since 1994 in the annual budget of the U.N.'s Balkan war-crimes tribunal : +780
Estimated number of people currently imprisoned in Uzbekistan for their religious or political beliefs : 6,500
Percentage increase in U.S. military aid to Uzbekistan since 2001 : 1,800
timated number of Americans who refuse to pay some or all of their federal income taxes to protest military spending : 2,000
Days that the NYPD suspended a cop without pay last winter for refusing to arrest a man for sleeping in a parking lot : 30
Days of below-freezing weather last winter in Hell, Michigan : 86
Percentage change in the thickness of the Arctic ice pack since the 1960s : –40
Days in 1970 that northern Alaska was cold enough to operate oil-drilling machinery without damaging the tundra : 213
Days in 2002 that it was cold enough : 106
ank of oil exports and money sent home by U.S. immigrants, respectively, among Mexico's largest sources of income : 1, 2
Number of political candidates murdered during Colombia's regional election campaigns last year : 26
Percentage approval rating of Peruvian president Alejandro Toledo last July : 11
mount by which 2004 campaign contributions to Lyndon LaRouche had exceeded those to Wesley Clark last fall : $1,900,000
Chance that an American believes a "major" third political party is needed : 2 in 5
Minimum number of political parties registered in the United States : 46
Number of them represented in California's gubernatorial race last year : 6
Number of cast members of the movie *Predator* who have run for governor : 3
Number who have won : 2
atio of the first month's sales of the new *Elvis 2nd to None* album to those of the last album released in Presley's lifetime : 3:1
Minimum amount boxer Mike Tyson earned in the nine years before filing for bankruptcy last August : $300,000,000
Price of a dozen action figures of one's self, prototype included : $889.45
Rank of rhinoplasty and liposuction among the most common plastic surgeries performed on men in the U.S. : 1, 2
Rank of rhinoplasty and penile enlargement among those most commonly performed on men in the U.K. : 2, 1
Inches by which the Eiffel Tower shrinks in winter : 6

*Figures are adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of November 2003. Sources are listed on page 84.*
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# READINGS

[Coda]

## THE INDISPENSABLE NATION

*From "Americans, If You Only Knew," by Régis Debray, published in the September 5* Le Figaro. *Translated from the French by Benjamin Storey and Donovan Hohn.*

Judging by the results, as they say in the military, it appears that Paris had a clearer view of things in Baghdad than Washington did. In the *New York Times* of February 23, 2003, I allowed myself to predict—merely by reading the newspapers in the light of history books—that the American war was going to "provoke chaos instead of order, and hatred instead of gratitude," while giving "a formidable second chance to the partisans of Bin Laden." That was before the "victory," and at the time many a distressed reader dismissed these somber prognostications as "ideological." An out-of-touch arch-Gaullist such as myself, however, is not bound by the euphemisms of transatlantic modesty. "When one tells it like it is," De Gaulle once remarked, "it's a scandal. If one says that England is an island, no one blinks. If one says that NATO has an American commander, everyone is shocked." To state the raw facts bluntly is a task, always thankless but never useless, reserved for those not in charge.

The Americans seem to have gotten themselves into an intractable mess in Iraq. They must now choose between a historical debacle if they hang on and a temporary setback if they let go. "We cannot leave Iraq before it is stabilized," declared a former CIA officer. But to maintain a prolonged foreign occupation of Iraq is to destabilize it only further. Once the invader departs, there will no doubt be a civil war, which will accelerate the dismemberment of the nation, giving rise to a fundamentalist regime, which will make at least some people miss the era of Saddam.

On the other hand, if the occupation persists, one can foresee a multifaceted terrorist escalation eating away at U.S. forces and aggravating ethnic and religious divisions. The Americans will bring in reinforcements, including Fijians and Norwegians. They'll talk of the final fifteen minutes and of last gasps. A coup d'état or uprising will be inspired in Teheran (terrain more favorable to the West than Iraq is) but with irritating repercussions in Najaf, which will be transformed into a base of retreat for vengeful ayatollahs. The Americans will cling to Iraq as "useful" and ensconce themselves inside supposedly unbreachable bastions. Then, as the death toll mounts by the hundreds, the "bring the boys home" movement will spread like an oil slick across the United States, and a new, Democratic administration will make the prudent decision to stop the hemorrhaging when the vital interests of the United States are not at stake. But how many lives will be ruined in the meantime?

The neocon clichés set the courageous, clear-eyed inhabitants of Mars/America against the lofty, retiring souls of Venus/Europe. The former follow the hard principles of reality; the latter preach morality on the cheap. This distribution of roles reveals a case of imperial

[Platform]

# MILLIONS AND MILLIONS LOST

*From an October 2 interview by Terry Gross, host of the National Public Radio program* Fresh Air. *Grover Norquist is the president of Americans for Tax Reform and a principal architect of President Bush's tax plan.*

TERRY GROSS: Okay, the estate tax is only paid by somebody who gets over $2 million in inheritance. I mean, you're talking about $2 million. That's a line people don't cross a lot.

GROVER NORQUIST: The argument that some who play at the politics of hate and envy and class division will say, "Yes, well, that's only 2 percent of Americans." I mean, that's the morality of the Holocaust. "Well, it's only a small percentage," you know. I mean, it's not you. It's somebody else.

GROSS: Excuse me. Excuse me one second. Did you just—

NORQUIST: Yeah?

GROSS: —compare the estate tax with the Holocaust?

NORQUIST: No, the morality that says it's okay to do something to a group because they're a small percentage of the population is the morality that says the Holocaust is okay because they didn't target everybody, just a small percentage. What are you worried about? It's not you. It's them. And arguing that it's okay to loot some group because it's them, or kill some group because it's them, and because it's a small number—that has no place in a democratic society.

I think it's immoral to separate the society. When South Africa divided people by race, that was wrong. When East Germany divided them by income and class, that was wrong. Dividing people so that you can mug them one at a time is a bad thing to do. Whether you're doing it on racial grounds, religious grounds, or whether-you-work-on-Saturdays-or-not grounds—on economic grounds.

GROSS: So you see taxes as terrible discrimination against the wealthy comparable to the discrimination of, say, the Holocaust?

NORQUIST: Well, you can use different rhetoric or different points for different purposes, and I would argue that those who say, "I'm only doing it to a small percentage of the population"—that's immoral. They shouldn't be shooting anyone, and they shouldn't be taking half of anybody's income or wealth when they die.

self-deception. The American leadership has come to believe in its dreamworld so completely that like some Alice in Horrorland, unable to escape from the mirror, it mistakes its intellectual fantasies for practical measures.

It was lured down this rabbit hole by three magic words, fallacies disguised as self-evident truths. First, "terrorism." Of course every great nation needs a great enemy, but there's a problem: although there are terrorist modes of action, terrorism itself does not exist. "The use of extreme violence against disarmed populations outside any context of declared war" (a definition of terrorism) is a tactic of opportunity, a mode of operation, which includes everything and its opposite, from Corsican guerrillas to the French, Algerian, and Palestinian resistance. Just as the ideas of my enemy were once ideology, so the violence of my dissidents will now be terrorism.

This adverb mistaken for a noun promises a hundred years' war—interminable because neither armistice nor capitulation is possible—in which the Empire, lacing up its boxing gloves to battle a swarm of flies, will exhaust its strength in a perpetually recommencing fight against everybody and nobody.

"Democracy" is the second of these magic words. Ultra-sovereigntist, the American hypernation reserves for itself the exclusive right to patriotism but intends to export "democracy" wherever and whenever it suits its interest. "Democracy" is the contemporary equivalent of the old "civilization," which brought to the backward peoples of the world the European colonialism of the nineteenth century, the humanitarian character of which has been largely forgotten. Then, too, the colonialists were supposedly rescuing the oppressed from tyranny, slavery, and fanaticism. But since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, democracy at home has never gotten in the way of prisons for recalcitrant foreigners or napalm for foreign dissidents.

And indeed, "one man, one vote" in the Middle East is not in the interest of the United States. If tomorrow the Americans could wave a magic wand and democratize Iraq, they would have to pack their bags the next day. For, as a former Israeli foreign minister has said, the choice in this region is not between democracy and dictatorship but between secular dictatorship and Islamic democracy.

The third source of hypnosis is "weapons of mass destruction." On September 11 it was nineteen men with box cutters. The Pentagon was preparing for cyberterrorism and got pocket knives. Tomorrow, it will be a rifle shot, a mortar shell, or a hunk of TNT. It is with the archaic and the artisanal that the best-armed country in the world—5 percent of the population, nearly 50 percent of the total military expenditure—




*"Map Room, Soviet Military Base in Former East Germany," by Brian McKee, appeared in* 25 Under 25: Up-and-Coming American Photographers, *published last month by powerHouse Books.*

should be concerned. The United States, a nation of engineers, is in thrall to a technological illusion and thinks of arms rather than men, visible devices rather than interior dispositions (belief in the afterlife is undetectable via infrared). The alliance of the two is certainly volatile, but the detonator is belief.

Nor should one underestimate the geographic expansion of legitimate intervention zones. Because any desert and any jungle can harbor a factory for weapons of terror, a superpower must have eyes everywhere in order to be tranquil at home. Every attack it launches on the other side of the world becomes an act of self-defense, and it is therefore possible to be both neo-isolationist and omni-interventionist, as the defensive perimeters of Los Angeles and Chicago are now situated in sub-Saharan Africa, the Red Sea, and perhaps, tomorrow, Cape Horn. But an escalation to immediate and total war is not the best way to bring states that finance terrorism to the light of reason.

Our moralists compete in criticizing the lies, distortions, and exaggerations of our master planners. But the majesty that certain spin doctors showed in giving the international community nonexistent morsels to chew on should command our admiration. Every country, like every man and every animal, makes as much as it can of its own power, so who can blame those who have the material capacity for transforming their military emergency into the number-one moral emergency of all humanity? Plato permitted lying in only two occupations: doctors and statesmen. The preemptive strike in self-defense is as old as the Peloponnesian War.

It is reassuring to note that the same distortions that allowed Washington to give credibility to this war will hasten its defeat in the end. The software of representation replaces reality with the illusion of a world made to order, as in a film or a sitcom, but only for so long. Today's dominators control the present by training the projectors, microphones, and lenses on whatever place, problem, or person they wish, but reality is what happens

after the cameras leave. The dominated takes his time, which works in his favor. The media transmitted the images of celebration in a liberated Kabul of Afghan women unveiled, of the posthumous victory of Massoud, of the rediscovery of tolerance. But when the facts later become disagreeable, the Empire brings its reporters back home. No one sees the Afghan women back in their burkas, the Taliban everywhere, nor the 3,000 tons of opium, cultivated by Massoud's heirs, now headed west.

The ability to brainwash the world into believing one's domestic delusions has been the ambition of empires for three millennia, but America has transformed this advantage into a weakness. By aspiring to rule the little people of the world without taking into account their language, their religion, their memories—in sum, all that makes them other than we might like—the United States guarantees its own failure. Muslim houses are searched with dogs, X-rated theaters are opened, and one of the principal administrators of the universities of the oldest country in the world is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. This deliberate blindness, which confuses the barbarous with the civilized and transforms the occupied into a video-game target, is the curse of all omnipotent sovereignties.

Disdain does not pay in the long run, but how does one get through to deaf men who can support their empty ideas with a formidable reserve of dollars, patents, arms, and an enviable patriotism? With power, there is no other argument than power, a costly counterweight with which the European Union no longer wishes to be weighed down. Rome therefore decides for the Greeks. Did she not liberate them from Macedonian oppression? Did she not force the ferocious Phillip V to let go of Rhodes, Athens, and Pergamum? Is not the Roman camp the camp of liberty? The Achaean League thus awaited the decisions of the Senate, begging it to send a few legions to Greece, to stop the troubles on its Balkan perimeters. Rome is a Hellenic power, said Polybius. "The United States has become a European power," says Richard Holbrooke. And the Roman Senate plots to train the new Greece against the old one, the unconditionally loyal cities against the more insolent ones, who forget what they owe their protector.

That was two centuries before Christ. The procedures of subjection have hardly changed. Nor has voluntary servitude. When France had the means to be the "indispensable nation," she was equally suicidal and deaf, equally cultivated and stubborn, just as doctrinaire and unimaginative as the present titleholder. The exercise of power is anonymous, and its laws are universal. The day before yesterday, it was Rome. Tomorrow it will be China. That is why the free man is not anti-American but anti-imperial. He refuses to march to the pace of the cosmic metronome. He knows that soldiers like Faulkner, Orson Welles, and Dylan must be saved. But he laughs when people vilify "knee-jerk anti-Americanism" so as to assimilate themselves, with good conscience, into the so-called New World Order, which knows how to recompense its own with money, prestige, authority, and influence.

With its proconsuls and its aircraft carriers, the rapacious and generous America revisits the time of colonizers drunk on their superiority, convinced of their liberating mission, and counting on reimbursing themselves directly. We built roads; they build airports. We brought books and schools; they bring videotapes. We brought penniless Catholic missionaries; they bring wealthy evangelical sects. But when, a century from now, our American friends come back to their senses and turn against this "capture of Baghdad" (along with the oil wells), it will be, without a doubt, with the same perspective, incredulous and annoyed, from which we French now regard the capture of Tunis or of Hué (along with the good soil and coal mines). *Historia non facit saltus*. A certain historical wisdom and patience should make us indulgent, not blind, and still less complicit.

[Largesse]

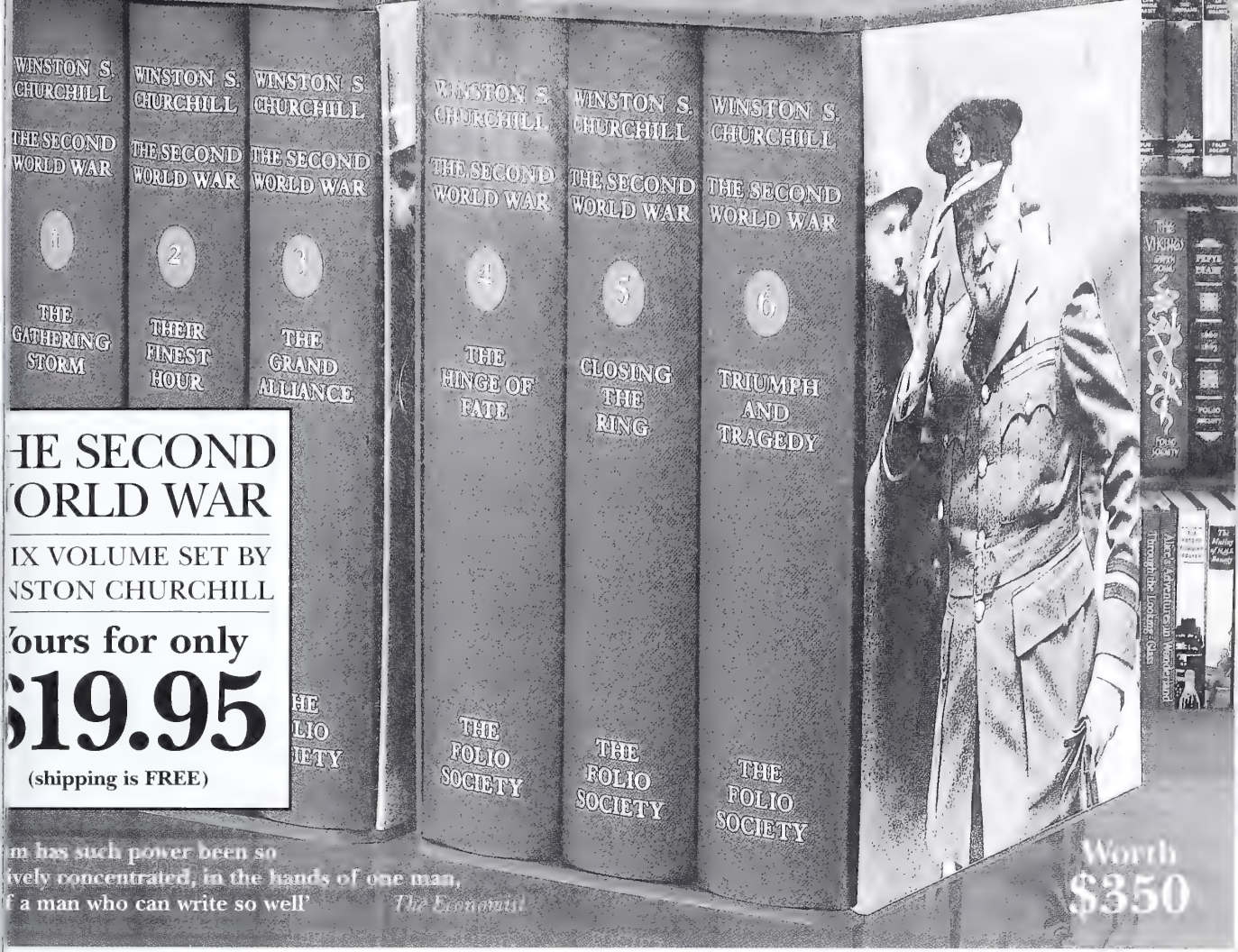
# WE COME IN PEACE

*The following letters were written by employees of Playtime, an adult toy store in Edison, New Jersey, to accompany thirty-six vibrators sent as gifts to Iraqi women last October. The project was funded by Playtime's owner, staff, and customers, and undertaken "for humanitarian reasons."*

Dear Iraqi Woman,

From what I've seen on the news, you and your fellow women have been suppressed for some time, and now that you've been liberated it is our thinking that we should spread love and hope. There's no better way to do that than with vibrators.

I've selected a glow-in-the-dark vibrator with variable speeds because it is not only a convenient size and shape but the glow feature may come in handy during those dark Iraqi nights. I'm also enclosing some Eros lube because it is one of the best lubes I have ever used and I think it will hold up well in the arid desert conditions. It's our hope that through these vibrators we can in some small way bridge the gap between our two countries.




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Howdy from NJ!

Hello. I'd like you to know I personally selected the enclosed vibrator for you.

We have never met and I don't know anything about you, but I do know that the enclosed vibrator is very popular with women in the 21–35 age bracket and was featured in a TV show here in the U.S. called *Sex and the City*.

I hope that when you use this vibrator you realize that Americans do not hate you or your country. We are a kind and loving people who just want everyone to live freely and without oppression.

Dear Iraqi Woman,

As the bombs and molten death rain unmercifully upon your homeland, know that there are those of us, in various corners of the world, who sympathize with what you are going through.

Although there is very little that I myself can accomplish to stop the invasion of your homeland, know that I am helping to send you various sexual toys and well-wishes in a show of solidarity. The Prophet (just like all religious figures) preaches patience, and I believe that your suffering will be short-lived.

Soon your precious oil reserves will be plundered, and your country will no longer be important. A local despot will gain power, and the great cycle will continue. Enjoy your vibrator while you can. When my fellow Americans leave your country, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to enjoy it much longer.

Greetings to my Iraqi sister,

I love getting gifts and surprises, and I hope you feel the same way. The items in this box were selected personally by me for you. The Sphincterine wipes will help you keep your anus and vagina minty fresh (I imagine things get a bit musky there in Iraq) and tasting great. The lube is one of the finest in the world and can really help enhance your pleasure.

The vibrator I am enclosing is the same as the model I personally use. It is soft and bendable and features metal pleasure beads attached to the center shaft so the beads can continue to rotate regardless of how tight you clench! Trust me, it can be one wild ride!

Feelings here in the U.S. are mixed about Iraq right now, just as I am sure your feelings are mixed about America. What I want you to know is that I am sending this gift to show that the sisterhood of woman is stronger than politics, stronger than religion, and stronger than any doctrine or rhetoric. It unites us all, and through this bond we can find peace. Enjoy this gift, my faraway sister, and know that I love you.

[Tutelage]

# ARSE AMATORIA

*From "Natt&Dag's Guide to Having Sex with Muslims," an article by Norwegian journalist Bard Forgersen published in the October issue of* Natt&Dag, *an Oslo tabloid. Shortly after the article's publication, fifteen Pakistani youths mistakenly attacked a man with the same name as the author. Translated from the Norwegian.*

They are everywhere. Many of them are very attractive. Even so, bedding a Muslim can seem like an unattainable dream. Here is a guide for the person who wants to make an intimate acquaintance with a daughter of Mohammed.

1. How to get under the veil of a Muslim girl:

There are those of you who don't believe it's possible to get a Muslim naked.

But, as we in the West know, you can't see the world in black-and-white. Muslim girls are as individual as snowflakes and range from the circumcised women of North Africa to the happy and horny Turkish girls. Still, for our purposes, we have chosen to focus on the type of Muslim girl most often encountered in Norway: the Pakistani.

2. This is where you'll find them:

We know there are a lot of them, but where are they exactly? Can housework possibly occupy them twenty-four hours a day? Fortunately, there are a few good occasions to meet specimens of the forbidden fruit. The luckiest Pakistani girls are actually allowed to work at the Parliament building or in fabric stores.

3. Appeal to her desire for freedom:

Pakistani girls are, like most girls, horny. They dream of a life of freedom and romantic love. The classic love story *Romeo and Juliet* was written not long after the beginning of the Middle Ages, where the Pakistani girl remains. She dreams, paradoxically, about a man who can rescue her from the patriarchal order.

4. Dress like a Bohemian:

It's the Western Bohemian look they want. Actually, it's quite obvious: If a Pakistani girl is going to go to bed with someone before marriage, she wants adventure. She wants you with long wavy hair, on top of a skateboard, and adorned with exotic tattoos.

5. Don't misbehave:

Many Muslim men act like pigs. Shoot-outs, robberies, alcohol, and rough sex are all part of their culture. Most of the kiosks owned and run by Pakistanis overflow with pornography.

So be thoughtful, and show sensitivity and consideration.

6. Don't eat pork:

To have sex with a man who isn't Muslim is one thing. To have sex with a man who isn't Muslim and eats pork is another. Would you want to share your body with a woman who eats rat meat as her primary diet? Instead, grab a halal kebab.

7. Show respect for her culture:

Name-drop Bollywood hits. Say that even though you really appreciate music from India, you are on the side of Pakistan when it comes to the conflict over Kashmir. Learn to say in Urdu, "No woman is as attractive in a bikini as you are in a veil."

Admit that the West has its problems too, and point to greed and overconsumption. Emphasize that, despite it all, Islam has a lot to offer.

[Valediction]

## CHRONICLE OF A DEATH FORETOLD

*From a recently released letter by Heshu Yones, a sixteen-year-old Iraqi Kurd who was planning to run away from her family home in London. On October 12, 2002, Yones's father repeatedly stabbed her and slit her throat, because he believed that she was dating a non-Muslim and had become too "Westernized." Abdalla Yones is currently serving a life sentence for murder.*

Goodbye Mum, I will see you again one day. Thank you a thousand times for trying so hard for me. I'm sorry I was such a bad friend. Some day I will try and make it up to you. Keep letting off that gas in your fat stomach. Enjoy life—now that I'm gone, there's no more trouble. I promise you I will be good.

Bye Dad, sorry I was so much trouble. Me and you will probably never understand each other. I'm sorry I wasn't what you wanted, but there's some things you can't change. Hey, for an older man you have a good strong punch and kick. I hope you enjoyed testing your strength on me; it was fun being on the receiving end. WELL DONE.

The time has come for us to part. I'm sorry that I have caused so much pain, but after sixteen years of living with you it is evident that I shouldn't be a part of you. I take all the blame openly—I'm not the child you wanted or expected me to be. DISAPPOINTMENTS ARE BORN OF EXPECTATIONS. Maybe you expected a different me and I expected a different you.

One day when I have a proper job every penny I owe you will be repaid in full. I will find a way to look after myself. I will go to social security to get myself a flat or hostel. I will be okay. Don't look for me, because I don't know where I'm going yet. I just want to be alone. But I will be safe. So have a nice day, have a nice week, have a nice life, because the biggest problem in this house has now left.

Bro, I'm not leaving you forever, just for a little while. I'm sorry to do this to you. I LOVE YOU MORE THAN I KNOW WHAT THE WORD LOVE MEANS. PLEASE FORGIVE ME!!! My problem has always been too much talk, too little action. So goodbye. One day you will see that I will make something good of myself. This isn't an end, it's just a new beginning, so enjoy. I'll come and visit you at school, as often as I can. So you'll be seeing a lot of me, okay?

LIFE, BEING HOW IT IS, ISN'T NECESSARILY HOW IT IS. IT IS JUST SIMPLY HOW YOU CHOOSE TO SEE IT.

GOODBYE & GOOD LUCK.

[Acrostic]

## SON OF MR. GREEN JEANS

*By Dinty W. Moore, from the Spring issue of* Crazyhorse.

ALLEN, TIM

Best known as the father on ABC's *Home Improvement*, the popular comedian was born Timothy Allen Dick on June 13, 1953. When Allen was eleven years old, his father, Gerald Dick, was killed by a drunk driver while driving home from a University of Colorado football game.

BEES

"A man, after impregnating the woman, could drop dead," Camille Paglia suggested to Tim Allen in a 1995 *Esquire* interview. "That is how peripheral he is to the whole thing."

"I'm a drone," Allen responded. "Like those bees."

"You are a drone," Paglia agreed. "That's exactly right."

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—The New York Times

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—The Wall Street Journal

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One customer published his view of our guarantee, which we have reproduced below:

"It was just a plain jane mailer from The Teaching Company. They offer taped lectures by prominent professors on subjects that get my heart racing. I remembered receiving mailers from the company before, though I had never purchased anything. As I glanced at the one, though, something caught my eye. They offered a lifetime satisfaction guarantee on every tape in their catalog.

What? I had to read that again. But there it was right on the front page.

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[illegible]. Where's my credit card?

But there's another reason for the guarantee - ethics. Thomas Rollins, president of The Teaching Company, says his company values clients so much, he simply doesn't want them to have a product they don't absolutely love. In our lively phone conversation, he said,

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—Dean Rieck,
Direct Marketing magazine
April 2000

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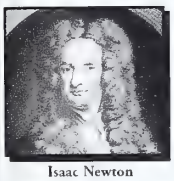
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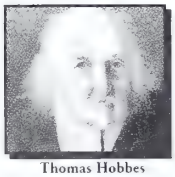
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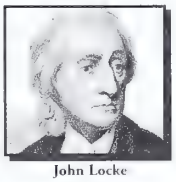
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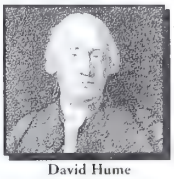

Isaac Newton


René Descartes


Blaise Pascal


Thomas Hobbes


John Locke


David Hume

Prints and Photographs Division Library of Congress

As an educated person, you're aware that many of the basic concepts shaping our world are "young" ideas, no more than a few centuries old. Modern science, technology, democratic government, natural rights, and even a general tendency to be open to innovation are a few examples. Our society and culture take them as givens even while we continue to debate their meaning and implications.

But where did these clusters of ideas come from? How are they related to one another, to ideas that came before, and to our problems and dilemmas today? How did they become so prominent so swiftly? And how did these ideas overcome the intellectual dominance of Aristotle and the Church.

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Plateau, *by Forrest Williams. His work was on display last fall at the Arnot Art Museum, in Elmira, New York.*

CARP

After the female Japanese carp gives birth to hundreds of tiny babies, the father carp remains nearby. When he senses approaching danger, he sucks the helpless babies into his mouth and holds them there until the coast is clear.

DIVORCE

University of Arizona psychologist Sanford Braver tells the story of a woman who felt threatened by her husband's close bond with their young son. The husband had a flexible work schedule, but the wife did not, so the boy spent the bulk of his time with the father. The mother became so jealous of the tight father-son relationship that she filed for divorce and successfully fought for sole custody. The result was that instead of being in the care of his father while the mother worked, the boy was now left in day care.

EMPEROR PENGUINS

Once a male emperor penguin has completed mating, he remains by the female's side for the next month to determine if the act has been successful. When he sees a single greenish-white egg emerge from his mate's egg pouch, he begins to sing. Scientists have characterized his song as "ecstatic."

FATHER KNOWS BEST

In 1949, Robert Young began *Father Knows Best* as a radio show. Young played Jim Anderson, an average father in an average family. The show later moved to television, where it was a major hit, but Young's successful life was troubled by alcohol and depression.

At age eighty-three, Young attempted suicide by running a hose from his car's exhaust pipe to the interior of the vehicle. The attempt failed because the battery was dead and the car wouldn't start.

HUGH BEAUMONT

The actor who portrayed the benevolent father on the popular TV show *Leave It to Beaver* was a Methodist minister. Tony Dow, who played older brother Wally, reports that Beaumont actually hated kids. "Hugh wanted out of the show after the second season," Dow told the *Toronto Sun*. "He thought he should be doing films and things."

INHERITANCE

My father was a skinny, asthmatic, and eager-to-please little boy, not the tough guy his hard-living Irish father had wanted. My dad lost his mother at age three and later developed a severe stuttering problem, perhaps as a result of his father's disapproval. My father's adult vocabulary was outstanding, due to his need for alternate words when faltering over difficult consonants like B or D.

The stuttering grew worse over the years, with one exception: after downing a few whiskeys, my father could sing like an angel. His Irish tenor became legendary in local taverns, and by the time I entered the scene my father was spending every evening visiting the bars. Most nights he would stumble back drunk around midnight; some nights he was so drunk he would stumble through a neighbor's back door, thinking he was home.

As a boy, I coped with the family's embarrassment by staying glued to the television. I desperately wanted someone like Hugh Beaumont to be my father, or maybe Robert Young.

Hugh Brannum, though, would have been my first choice. Brannum played Mr. Green Jeans on *Captain Kangaroo,* and I remember him as being kind, funny, and extremely reliable.

LAUREN CHAPIN

Kitten, the youngest daughter on *Father Knows Best*, was played by Lauren Chapin. Chapin's father molested her, and her mother was a severe alcoholic. After the show ended in 1960, Chapin's life came apart. At age sixteen, she married an auto mechanic. At age eighteen, she became addicted to heroin and began working as a prostitute.

MALE BREADWINNERS

Wolf fathers spend the daylight hours away from the home hunting but return every evening. The wolf cubs, five or six to a litter, rush out of the den when they hear their father approaching and fling themselves at him, leaping up to his face. The father backs up a few feet and disgorges food for them, in small, separate piles.

PENGUINS, AGAIN

The female emperor penguin "catches the egg with her wings before it touches the ice," Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson writes in his book *The Emperor's Embrace*. She then places it on her feet, to keep it from contact with the frozen ground.

At this point, both penguins will sing in unison, staring at the egg. Eventually, the male penguin will use his beak to lift the egg onto the surface of his own feet, where it remains until hatching.

Not only does the male penguin endure the inconvenience of walking around with an egg balanced on his feet for months but he also will not eat for the duration.

RELIGION

In 1979, Lauren Chapin, the troubled actress who played Kitten, had a religious conversion. She credits her belief in Jesus with saving her life. After his television career ended, Methodist minister Hugh Beaumont became a Christmas-tree farmer.

WARD'S FATHER

In an episode titled "Beaver's Freckles," the Beaver says that Ward had "a hittin' father," but little else is ever revealed about Ward's fictional family. Despite Wally's constant warning—"Boy, Beav, when Dad finds out, he's gonna clobber ya!"—Ward does not follow his own father's example and never hits his sons on the show. This is an excellent example of xenogenesis.

XENOGENESIS

(zen'*u*-jen'*u*-sis), n. *Biol.* 1. heterogenesis 2. the supposed generation of offspring completely and permanently different from the parent.

Believing in xenogenesis, I changed my mind about having children about four years after rejecting my wife's first suggestion of the idea.

Y CHROMOSOMES

The Y chromosome of the father determines a child's gender, and is unique, because its genetic code remains relatively unchanged as it passes from father to son. The DNA in other chromosomes, however, is more likely to get mixed between generations, in a process called recombination. What this means, apparently, is that boys have a higher likelihood of inheriting their ancestral traits.

ZAPPA

Internet chatrooms and discussion lists repeatedly recycle the news that the actor who played Mr. Green Jeans was the father of musician Frank Zappa. But, in fact, Hugh Brannum had only one son, and he was neither Frank Zappa nor this author.

Sometimes, though, I still wonder what it might have been like.

[Profile]

# AN ARMY OF ONE

*From the text of the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training Reinforcer, a CD-ROM developed by the U.S. Army as an internal training tool in suicide prevention. The program simulates conversations between trainees and Billy Parker, a composite character based on interviews with families and friends of soldiers who have killed themselves. Program users select questions from those displayed on screen, and the program replies with one of up to nine possible responses. An average of 100 suicide interventions are conducted in the Army each day.*

QUESTION: Hi, Billy. How are things going?

RESPONSE: Well, last week I was late for training, and my commander, he's such a freakin' hard-ass, he slammed me. I'm facin' disciplinary action. It's not even fair.

RESPONSE: I had this argument with my wife, Teresa. It was stupid. Because of her stupid nagging I was late for training last week.

QUESTION: How are things going for you and Teresa?

RESPONSE: She doesn't like it here. She wants to move back home. We argue all the time, and she's always on me for dumb stuff like smoking. Last week we had this fight. She ticked me off so bad, I put my fist through a wall. Sometimes I think she cares more about her stupid cats than me.

RESPONSE: She hates it here. She's always complainin' about it. Hell, she's always complainin' about somethin'.

QUESTION: What were you fighting about?

RESPONSE: We were fighting about money. We always fight about money. We live in this dump in a trailer park, and we always talk about moving someplace better, but we don't have the money. Way things are goin' we won't ever have the money. I don't think we're ever gonna find a way out.

QUESTION: Well, Billy, lots of marriages fall apart, it's not a big deal.

RESPONSE: Yeah, well, it is to me.

QUESTION: How are things for you financially?

RESPONSE: We've been havin' some trouble with these collection companies callin'. We had a bunch a' credit cards a while back. It was a rough time, and we couldn't always make the minimum payments.

RESPONSE: Teresa's the problem. Her and the credit cards. She keeps charging dumb stuff we can't afford. Like last weekend she bought this $50 Kitty Condo. We can't even pay our bills, and she goes and buys that!

QUESTION: What's a Kitty Condo?

RESPONSE: It's this stupid thing covered with carpet or something for the cats to climb on. I could probably make one for five bucks!

RESPONSE: It's this stupid thing the cats are supposed to scratch so they don't claw the furniture. But the cats just ignore the thing and tear up the sofa anyway!

QUESTION: It can be tough on a military salary, can't it?

RESPONSE: Yeah. The only place we could afford to live was this trailer park, and it's a dump.

RESPONSE: Yeah. We don't have enough money to take a vacation or go anywhere. Since we got here, we haven't even been able to afford a trip back home.

QUESTION: What's Teresa been up to?

RESPONSE: She started this new job down at the mall. I think she just wanted to get out of the house.

RESPONSE: She just took up this dumb yoga thing. If you ask me, it's a waste of time and money. But she don't listen to me.

QUESTION: I agree with you that yoga's dumb.

RESPONSE: I just don't get it, but I've given up worrying about it.

RESPONSE: Ain't that the truth? Try tellin' her that though.

QUESTION: What's her new job?

RESPONSE: Um . . . She's working at one of those Glamour Photos places . . . You know, where they take your picture and all.

RESPONSE: She works at this clothes store . . . I think it's called Cosmo or something like that.

RESPONSE: She works at the Stuffed Potato, you know, in the food court.

RESPONSE: She's workin' down at the Shoe-Mart . . . That real big shoe store in the mall.

QUESTION: How do you feel about Teresa's new job?

RESPONSE: I don't know. I don't mind her workin' or nothin', but I kinda feel like I shoulda been able to support us, you know.

RESPONSE: It's a real pain. She's stopped cookin' and cleanin' up and goin' to the store for us and stuff like that. She says she's too busy with this job.

QUESTION: How were things for you growing up?



Study for a Problem, *by Becket Bowes, was on display last month at the Cleveland Institute of Art.*

RESPONSE: All right, I guess. My mom had some wacky boyfriends, but she did her best for us.

RESPONSE: Not bad. I grew up in Kentucky. Things got better after my dad left. He was a real jerk. Especially to my mom.

QUESTION: Tell me about your parents.

RESPONSE: My dad was a loser. Couldn't ever hold down a job. Think the longest he had one was ten months. Maybe less.

RESPONSE: My mom and dad are divorced. I haven't seen my dad since I was thirteen.

QUESTION: Billy, help me understand why you're thinking about suicide now.

RESPONSE: I don't know. I just can't seem to get my life together. There's nothin' good anymore. Things are miserable at home with Teresa. We're buried in bills. I just can't find a way out.

RESPONSE: Well . . . uh . . . I just got this thing in the mail saying we missed too many payments on the trailer. They're threatening to throw us on the street.

QUESTION: I would never consider suicide.

RESPONSE: You're not in my circumstances though.

QUESTION: I think suicide's a sin.

RESPONSE: Well, I'm not Catholic.

QUESTION: You should go to church. You'd probably feel better if you did.

RESPONSE: Yeah. Okay, mom.

RESPONSE: If bein' bored for an hour is your idea of feelin' better, then maybe you're right.

QUESTION: Okay, but I think it could really help. Why don't you think about it?

RESPONSE: Okay.

QUESTION: How does it make you feel, thinking about suicide?

RESPONSE: Someone like you, no offense, but you wouldn't understand.

RESPONSE: It's embarrassing. People'll think I was weak or something, but they don't understand.

RESPONSE: I don't let myself think about it . . .

it's too sad, which makes me feel even worse. It's like a never-ending cycle. It's all hopeless. I just want it to stop.

QUESTION: Why does it make you feel sad?

RESPONSE: I never thought it would end like this. I always thought that I would live the American dream—you know, a house, a dog, kids . . . I wanted to prove to my dad that I could be the father that he never was. Now it's like I'm this big failure, too.

RESPONSE: I don't know. I mean, I just feel like nothing is going right. Nothing is happening the way I wanted. I just wanted more from life, you know? I wanted to go to college or something. I wanted more.

[Debacle]

## HANGING ON THE TELEPHONE

*From a recently released transcript of July 9 emergency-response calls regarding the collapse of Memphis-area resident Jim Wagner.*

MEMPHIS FIRE DEPARTMENT: What is the address of your emergency?

CALLER: 2686 Kirby-Whitten Road just south of Summer Avenue at The Billiard Club.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay. What's the problem there, sir?

CALLER: I've got a person that's had a seizure or a heart attack, passed out totally, having convulsions.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Male or female?

CALLER: Male, approximately sixty years old.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay. Is he breathing?

CALLER: Ah, ma'am, I don't know. I'm across the building from him.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay. All right. We're on the way.

BARTLETT POLICE DEPARTMENT: Bartlett Police.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Yes, ma'am, we're needing you all on an emergency call at The Billiard Club.

BARTLETT POLICE: Where are you?

MEMPHIS FIRE: Hold on . . . 2686 Kirby-Whitten.

BARTLETT POLICE: Where is that? I mean, is it a business?

MEMPHIS FIRE: It's a business. It's a billiards club. And there's a party there in cardiac arrest.

BARTLETT POLICE: Now what's the name of this place?

MEMPHIS FIRE: I don't know the exact name of it, but it's a billiards club.

BARTLETT POLICE: A billiards club?

MEMPHIS FIRE: Yeah. 2686 Kirby-Whitten.

BARTLETT POLICE: Okay, I don't think that's ours.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Kirby-Whitten is not yours?

BARTLETT POLICE: Not below 2735, I don't think.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Oh my God. This is so ridiculous.

BARTLETT POLICE: Try the county.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay. No problem.

SHELBY COUNTY: May I help you?

MEMPHIS FIRE: We got a call at a billiards club at Whitten Road and Summer, and it didn't come up to be ours. Is that yours? Is that Bartlett?

SHELBY COUNTY: It's going to be Bartlett.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Bartlett, isn't it? All right. Let me call them.

SHELBY COUNTY: Okay.

MEMPHIS FIRE: All right. Thanks.

BARTLETT FIRE DEPARTMENT: Lt. Jones.

MEMPHIS FIRE: This is Memphis Fire. We got a call for a male who's passed out at The Billiards Club.

BARTLETT FIRE: Is that Memphis or is it county?

MEMPHIS FIRE: I don't know. I called county, they said it's yours.

BARTLETT FIRE: No. No. We stop at the road right before that. That's a Memphis call.

MEMPHIS FIRE: That's going to be city?

BARTLETT FIRE: Yeah. They got the businesses out there. Memphis got the businesses. I think county's still got the residences. But that right there is definitely not Bartlett.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay.

BARTLETT FIRE: If it's by that billiards in that shopping strip, that is going to be a Memphis call.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Okay.

BARTLETT FIRE: All right.

MEMPHIS POLICE DEPARTMENT: 911.

MEMPHIS FIRE: This is Fire Department. We're on the line with him. He got somebody in cardiac arrest and he's giving us an address that shows to be in Bartlett.

CALLER: It don't matter whose address, somebody—

MEMPHIS FIRE: Sir, we can't send anybody outside of Memphis.

MEMPHIS POLICE: It's right on the borderline, Fire. We normally handle those.

MEMPHIS FIRE: Fire Department. What's the location of the emergency?

CALLER: I'm still over here and I ain't seen no ambulance, no nothing.

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# SCAPEGOAT

E

I get a letter back from Ross Foods inviting me to work in their factory near Norwich for three months. I get overalls and boots and a white cap. I get a bed with a straw mattress that you have to beat into shape before you can lie on it at all. We all sleep in Nissen huts that they say were left over from the war. Hundreds of beds lined up on both sides under an arched roof where you can't even stand up straight at the side, only in the middle. It's very hot underneath, too. When the sun comes up in the morning, you can be boiling in your sleep without knowing it and wake up sweating like a pig. Everybody is complaining about lots of things. The heat. Lack of sleep. Snoring neighbours. Farting friends. Smelly socks. They complain about the work and the foremen. Somebody calls them Brits and nobody can forget history completely. But we're happy to be making money. And there's nothing to spend it on, only Mr. Kipling apple tarts from the canteen. We can't help saving up the rest. The personnel department keeps it all for you until the last day when you're leaving.

The foremen wear white coats and trilby hats. You can spot them a mile away. Some of them are good fun and make jokes, others talk like cowboys and give orders in a Norfolk accent. There are lots of hard men around. Shapers, as they are called, who don't say much, just look mean all the time as if they want a fight. But everybody is so bored that they have to talk to each other in the end, just to pass the time. The women are mostly from Norfolk, and their job is sitting at the conveyor belt picking out all the bad peas and throwing them on the floor so we can sweep them away. The machines do all the rest. There are graders that shake all day and all night, sorting out all the different sizes of peas. My job is sweeping away the peas on the floor into a drain. It's very easy work, but long. By the second day I can see mountains of green peas in my sleep.

There are lots of Ugandans working here as well, mostly medical students from London. You don't see them in the canteen very much, because they're trying to save up even more than we are, maybe to send some of the money home. They don't even smoke, because that's a waste. We get talking to some of them and they are good fun. They talk about Ugandan women and say they are the best in the world at moving their hips. One of them tells us that Ugandan women have venus hills like no other women. They ask us if Irish women can move their hips. We tell them that Irish women are out of this world, with breasts and venus [illegible]

Macgillicuddy's Reeks. We teach them the Irish for big prick: *bod in sheasamh*. All over the factory there are Ugandan medical students saying: *Bod mór agus bás in Éireann*. Big prick and death in Ireland. We teach them the Irish for sex, which is *bualadh craiceann:* beating skin. And they tell us the Ugandan word for bollocks. So then all the Irish guys go around calling each other "kabula."

"You fucking kabula" is what you hear all the time, but nobody means it because they're really very happy and just joking. People like insulting each other. It's a way of being friendly. Only once, somebody from my school threatened one of the Ugandans and said he would cut off his kabula and the Ugandan medical student said he would cut off the Irish guy's kabula and stuff it down his throat.

One of the Irish guys from my school is working on the weighbridge. He weighs the lorries coming in loaded with peas and weighs them going out again empty. He's got the best job in the whole place and everybody envies him, sitting in the sun all day, smoking cigarettes and waiting for the next truck. At the weekend, when all the office staff are gone, he leaves the window in the weighbridge open so the Ugandans can go in and call their relatives. They queue up and talk away in the weighbridge all night to their families back home, telling them what a great place England is. None of the Irish really want to phone home that much. One guy pretends to call his girlfriend back in Dublin, but everybody else says it's just his sister. The others call their friends at home and tell them what they are missing.

It's one of the best places in the world, the pea factory. I get promoted to being a forklift driver, lifting pallets and stacking them up. I am responsible for lifting the big cartons full of peas and driving them into the freezer. When you come out again it's like coming back into the tropics. Sometimes somebody jumps up on the back of the forklift truck to get a lift. And sometimes outside in the pallet yard, when there is nothing to do, you can chase the other forklift drivers around, a big forklift chase, like the film *Bullitt*, racing through the alleys of empty pallets.

And then it all comes to an end very suddenly one day. Some of the Irish guys are very bored doing the same thing all the time, just sleeping and working and eating apple tarts, so they decide to walk to the nearest town and see if they can get into the pub. They come back drunk and singing. One of them boasts that they met some girls and had a great time. The hips on them, they keep shouting to the men from Uganda, who are all asleep.



*Vulkan, by Neo Rauch, is currently on exhibit at the St. Louis Art Museum, in Missouri*

Englishwomen had the best hips in the world.

"Wow, man," one of them keeps saying as he swings his own hips around. "Your kabula goes on fire just watching them."

The Ugandan men are sitting up on their elbows, bleary with sleep, telling them to switch off the lights. Then one of the drunk guys starts getting sick outside the door of the barracks and everybody is complaining.

"Fuck off and puke somewhere else, you fucking kabula."

Young people are sometimes just like old men about their sleep. There is a fight at the door with somebody in his underpants trying to push the drunk people out. They eventually leave and go to the weighbridge instead, to drink a bit more and phone their girlfriends or sisters in the middle of the night. And then one of them comes back and starts shouting.

"You fucking British bastards."

It's almost dawn and there is a terrible cracking noise. One of the drunk guys is stabbing holes through the side of the barracks with a shovel and now the sun is shining right in like a torch beam through each hole. I can hear him outside, shouting and cursing at the British, running at the Nissen hut as if he had a pike in his hands.

"AAARGH," he shouts each time, like a croppy boy.

He's made about eight or nine holes before anyone is aware of what's going on. If the rain comes at all, we'll be soaked. Two of the boys run out in their underpants, one purple and one white. They restrain the drunk and take the shovel away from him, and eventually he falls asleep on the ground outside in the sun until his mates pull him inside like a dead man.

Next day there is an enquiry. The manager with his trilby hat is up inspecting the damage. He calls everybody into the canteen and makes a speech in his English accent. He says he is suspending all casual work until he finds out who sabotaged the hut. He doesn't seem angry, just disappointed. He says he cannot have this destruction going on. The culprit must own up. He will be fined for the damage and sent home. Otherwise, nobody will work again and everybody goes home. The machines in the factory stay working

and the foremen all do the jobs we were doing before, as if they never really needed us in the first place.

There is a big meeting in our barracks. The Ugandans say we have to sort this out, it's nothing to do with them. It's an Anglo-Irish problem and we all agree that they should be kept out of it. Everybody is discussing what to do. The guy who actually did all the damage doesn't want to go home. He's at university and he needs to work for another month. So the people who were drunk have a great plan. They ask if anyone would volunteer to act as the culprit. They will make a collection, pay the fine, and reward the stand-in culprit with lost bonuses and an extra two weeks' pay.

It seems like a great offer. Everybody walks around all morning talking about it. Then my friend Elvis asks me if I was thinking of volunteering. I haven't even considered it until he mentions the money and the fact that we could be on a train later on that same afternoon. I like the work here and I don't want to leave. I never want to go home, because here I can be myself, just a worker, a forklift driver. I'm even thinking of staying in England and never going back to school again. But I agree to do it. Elvis says we can feck off down to London, and there's a rock concert coming up in Reading. We can be listening to Pink Floyd instead of working with peas. All we have to do is act the criminal for a few minutes. Look guilty. Say you're sorry. Say you don't know what came over you. You've learned from this and you'll make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

So here we are, sitting in the manager's office. The manager is sitting behind his desk with his trilby hat resting on a stack of papers in front of him. There is a red ring around his forehead where the hat made an impression. First of all he says he's glad we owned up to the crime. He tells us how much the fine is and how much he will be taking off our final wage packet to repair the damage. That doesn't worry us, because all that will be paid back by the other guys who were responsible for the destruction, as well as much more. He tells us we will never be invited to work with Ross Foods again as long as we live. But that's all right too, because there are lots of other jobs in England and I was already thinking of getting a job in a bar, or even on the buses in London, or, better still, a job in a cinema where you'd get free tickets.

I tell myself that all this will be over soon. It's just a formality. Embarrassing as it is, he will soon give us our money and throw us out. But then the manager leans back in his chair. He looks for a long time into my eyes, then into Elvis's eyes, and then back at me again, and I can't look at him anymore. I know he's a nice man, because I talked to him before and he once asked me what I wanted to do when I left school. I said I didn't know and he thought that was a great answer and laughed. Now he looks into my eyes, full of accusation.

[Inventory]

## TORCH THONG

*From a police report filed last spring by officer Aaron Bergh in Menomonie, Wisconsin, concerning a legal search of Anthony Scholfield's apartment. Scholfield, a twenty-two-year-old college student, had been arrested several hours earlier for breaking and entering and is currently facing trial on three counts of felony burglary.*

We knocked on the door and were met by Scholfield's female roommate. We identified ourselves and informed her we had a warrant to search Scholfield's bedroom. She then allowed us into the residence. Upon entering Scholfield's bedroom I began searching the closet. There I located several items containing numerous pairs of women's underwear. The first item was a blue plastic bag containing what was later determined to be 104 pairs of women's underwear. Next was a gray lockbox containing 41 pairs of women's underwear. The next item discovered was a shoebox containing 27 pairs of women's underwear. The next item discovered was a cardboard box containing 106 pairs of women's underwear. Next I discovered two loose pairs of women's underwear. Next I discovered a Pokémon lunchbox containing 20 pairs of women's underwear, and next I discovered a blue hardened briefcase containing 73 pairs of women's underwear. Upon searching a white dresser located next to the closet, I discovered additional pairs of women's underwear in the second drawer from the top. I discovered 185 loose pairs of women's underwear. In the third drawer from the top I discovered 130 pairs of women's underwear.

While I inventoried the underwear, Officer Swantz and Officer Mroczenski scanned the underwear for specifically described pairs as previously reported missing.

The total number of recovered pairs of women's thong-style underwear was 854.

"I didn't expect this from you," he says.

"I'm sorry," is all I can say.

"But why? Why did you do it?"

My friend tries to brazen it out by shrugging his shoulders. He's more defiant and therefore looks like he actually did it. Maybe I'm still resisting the guilt. I know the manager won't let us go until we give some kind of explanation. I have to try and imagine that I was really the person who carried out this crime. I tell him I got drunk in the town. How much did I drink, he wants to know. What pub? You look too young to be let into a pub, he says. I don't even know the name of the pub. He asks so many questions in a hurry that I nearly give myself away.

"I don't know what came over me," I say as a last resort.

It's like an interrogation, only the other way around. I'm afraid he might find out that I didn't do it.

"Is it something you have against the British?" he asks.

"No," I say. "No, it's nothing like that. Honestly."

"I can't understand it," he goes on after some more intense silence. He's staring at us like a psychologist, puzzled, benevolent, hoping to work out what's inside our heads. He says the money and the damage don't matter as much as finding out why we did it. All he's after is the truth. He's got lots of time. He wants to know if we were unhappy with the work at Ross Foods, did we feel we were being exploited, or that we were not earning enough money.

We look at each other, Elvis and I. We're trying to come up with an answer, anything that will make him give up this endless trial. It's like the final judgement day. Sitting in the office looking at his white hat on the table. At least if you're guilty you can just give in under pressure and say you did it. Go on, put me in prison. Execute me, whatever. If you're guilty you can come clean and put your hands up, take the punishment.

"Why?" he asks one final time.

I can see that Elvis has thought of something. He looks up at last and says maybe it's got something to do with all the peas.

"Too many peas," he says.

I can't keep myself from laughing. I'm trying hard not to, but that makes it worse. I finally burst out with a snigger, a snort or a sneeze, something involuntary. I try to cover up my face with my hand. We are in danger of cracking up. I can't look at Elvis anymore, because we'll both be laughing uncontrollably and that won't help things. The manager looks at us in complete astonishment. As if we are so truly guilty now, laughing in the face of our interrogator, mocking justice like cold-blooded criminals without an ounce of remorse.

"It's not funny," he says.

I realize that he still has our money. I'm going to crack. I am about to deny everything. I want to retract my confession.

"That's really cheap," he says. "You smash up the place and then laugh at it."

I can't take this guilt any longer. I hate the way the manager stares across his desk at me in disgust, accusing me of something I didn't do. It makes me sick. But then it also gives me a new kind of power that I've never felt before. No matter how often they say I'm guilty, I know they're wrong. I'm innocent and he can't see it.

Finally, he opens the drawer and takes out two envelopes. He's lost his patience and become angry. He wants us out.

"I can't understand you people," he says.

And then it's all over. We pack our bags and walk out past the weighbridge for the last time. Some of the boys think we're real heroes for saving everybody else. We get lots of money, more than we expected. It's sad leaving, but the money is worth it. And the accolades. They call us "fucking kabulas" and that is the best thing anyone can say to you. They envy us heading off. They envy our freedom.

We get the bus to Norwich. We wait for the train and soon we'll be in London looking at all the films, drinking in bars, and going to nightclubs. We get on the train and put our feet up on the seats. We're lashing down to London, speeding through the flat countryside where all the peas are grown. Machines harvesting. Trucks waiting to be filled up. We're free while they are all still working. We will soon be listening to music and dancing with women, while back at Ross Foods they'll be going insane with the sight of green peas all around them. They will be dreaming of peas and engines shaking without stopping all night. They'll be complaining about the smell of socks and the rain coming in through the holes in the roof. They'll be dreaming of women in white coats and white underwear dancing around and throwing peas at each other. They'll be dreaming of hips and breasts and venus hills. Of peas and nipples and arms and legs. They'll be dreaming of lying down across banks of peas with women taking their white coats off. Women saying things that you can't hear because of the sound of the graders shaking all day. Peas rolling over soft skin. Peas rolling into belly buttons like roulette.



*"Rust Abstract," by Gil Mares, was on display last summer at Kidder Smith Gallery, in Boston.*

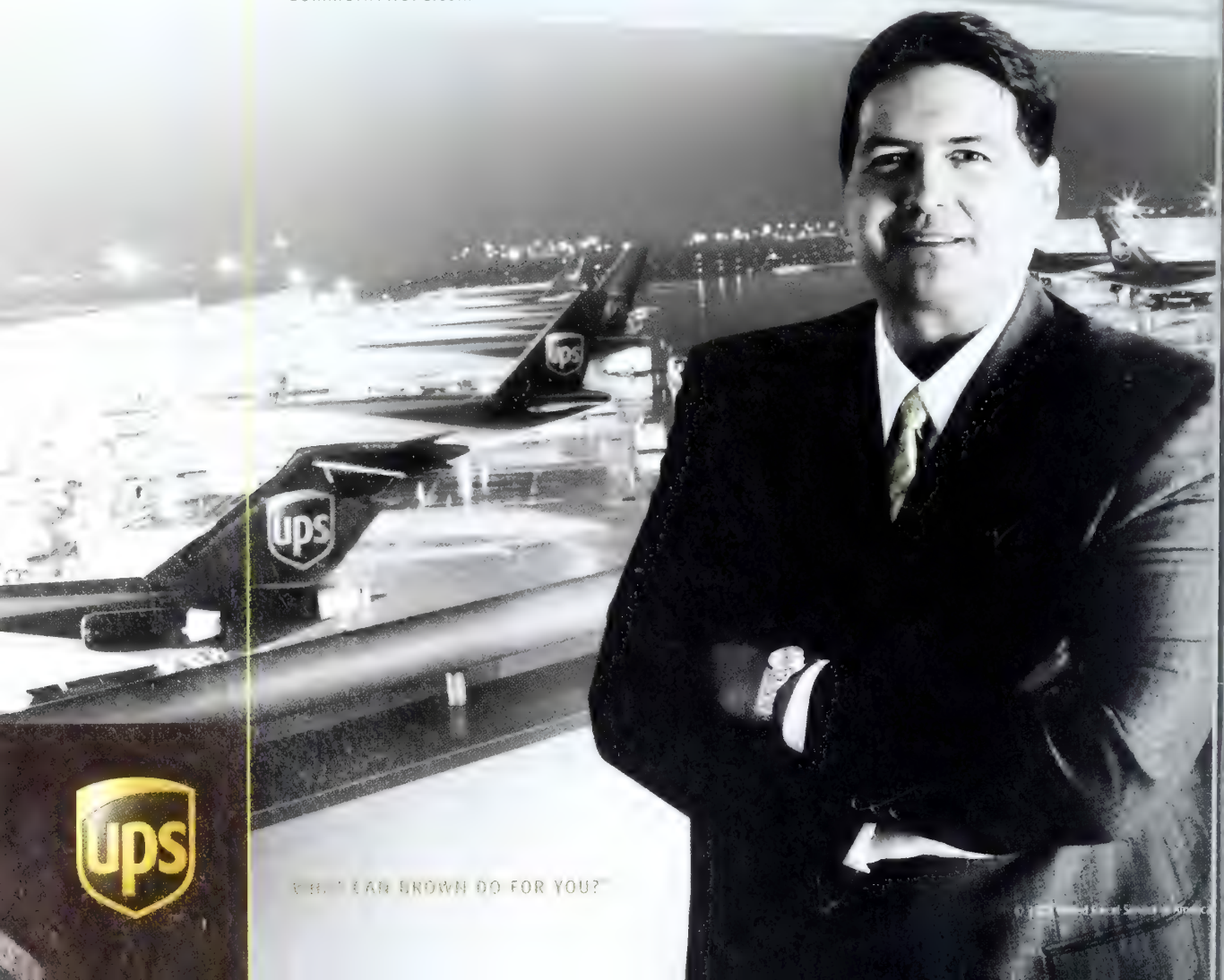
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WHAT CAN BROWN DO FOR YOU?

# WAR CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

## What the United States could learn from the Milosevic trial

*By Guy Lesser*

*they call it "criminal" . . .*

February 11, 2003

What is most disconcerting about the proceedings currently underway at The Hague, which began a year ago this past February and are likely to continue for another two years or more, is the disjunction between what you see before you and the events being addressed: a decade in which a country's long-dormant potential for violent ethnic hatred became the central fact of its existence, many thousands of its citizens lost their lives, millions lost their homes and property, and many hundreds of thousands were either forcibly displaced within what had been a stable state or condemned to exile. But here all is calm and orderly. The room is brightly lit, and in contrast to more traditional courtrooms there is none of the usual mahogany majesty or cathedral scale to dwarf the visitor or to imply the traditional pieties that the Law is as eternal as Truth and Reason. What you see instead is more like a conference-center meeting room in which a group of professionals are routinely going about their jobs. Even the bulletproof glass wall, which screens visitors such as myself from the proceedings, seems almost decorative, lending to the courtroom space the suggestion of an old museum diorama or a giant, waterless aquarium.



TORN POSTER OF SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC, BELGRADE, 2001

The defendant, Slobodan Milosevic, Yugoslavia's former leader, arrives each morning immaculately groomed. He favors dark blue, wool business suits of conservative British cut, freshly ironed blue or white cotton dress shirts with French cuffs, and silk ties, in either vivid maroon or red-white-and-blue regimental stripes. His black shoes are meticulously polished, his white hair carefully combed and recently cut. And his black leather Hermès briefcase is invariably well stuffed in preparation for the day to come, since he has chosen to appear *pro se* and is enthusiastically waging his own defense—a situation that is unusually challenging for both his judges and his prosecutors,

*Guy Lesser's last essay for* Harper's Magazine, *"Browsing for Gold," appeared in the January 2002 issue.*

Photograph © Thomas Dworzak/Magnum Photos

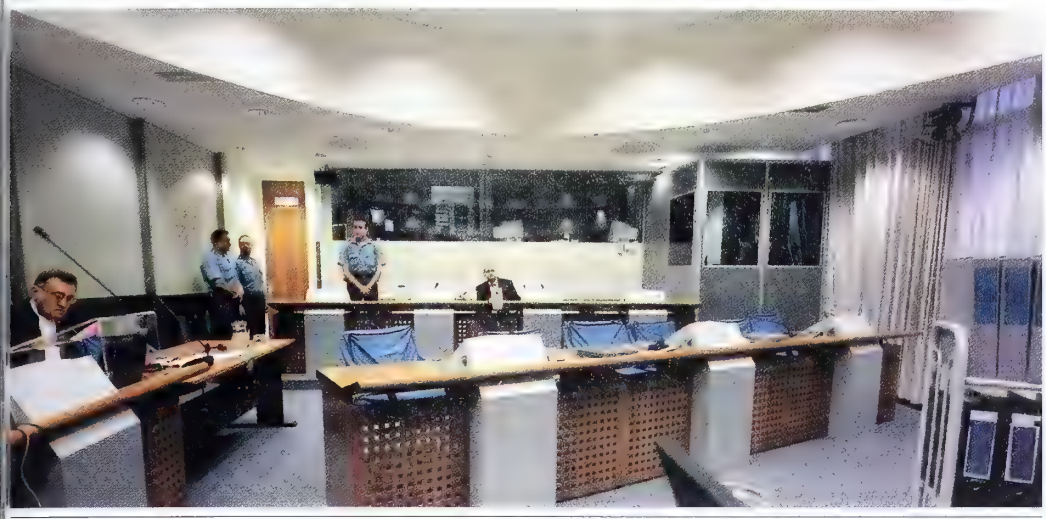
who must afford him a "fair trial," but seems very much to the liking of "the Accused," as Milosevic is often termed.

Before going to The Hague, I had followed the proceedings on a regular basis, either by watching live webcasts at 3:00 A.M. on the Internet or by downloading trial transcripts when they appeared on the U.N. website a couple of weeks later. As a form of reality television, the trial is, to put it plainly, a bit of a slog. Occasionally, there is a day when a witness gives as good as or better than he gets under Milosevic's blunt but frequently effective cross-examination. And many of the so-called crime-based witnesses (often farmers from tiny villages) tell utterly harrowing stories of narrow escapes from death squads and of helplessly watching their sons, daughters, and parents being summarily executed. There have even been a few insiders (or "co-perpetrators" of Milosevic's "criminal enterprise," to employ the language of the indictment) who have given true-life cloak-and-dagger details of how guns and money made their way from Belgrade to either nationalistic local militias or the sinister paramilitary groups responsible for most of the decade's worst dirty work. But ultimately the most interesting challenge in watching the proceedings is less about trying to sort out the daily testimony as it is presented by the prosecutors and more about trying to size up Milosevic as a man—and to ponder the enduring human capacity for evil. For as you watch Milosevic conducting his own defense, peppering every witness with minutely detailed questions—regardless of how distant or unimportant the witness may be to the issue of Milosevic's own part in events—it is hard to avoid concluding that here is someone (1) temperamentally incapable of delegating the smallest task, (2) utterly obsessed with knowing every minor aspect of just about everything, and (3) remarkably jealous of continually maintaining total control over whatever he may be doing, whatever it might be. Fortunately for Milosevic, nothing he says or does in the courtroom when acting as his own advocate will affect the judges in any way in their final assessment of the case.

As the American, British, French, and Russian architects of the famous Nazi war-crimes trials held at Nuremberg in 1945 discovered, the common law's "adversarial" tradition is not easily reconciled with the "inquisitorial" (or investigative) approach of traditional civil law, and conducting trials in which judges, prosecutors, and defendants come from different countries (or legal cultures) poses a host of difficulties. Nevertheless, there are some thirteen elements to trial fairness about which there is a measure of consensus, and being afforded the choice to defend yourself when a trial is essentially adversarial in nature is almost universally recognized. Among the other twelve (often expressed in the language of "fundamental human rights") there is at least some agreement that to be "fair": (1) a trial should presume the defendant is innocent and treat him accordingly; (2) the trial should be limited in its subject matter by an indictment that clearly sets out the charges against the defendant and specifically spells out both what conduct of his was criminal and what laws were thereby broken; (3) the defendant should have the opportunity to be present at the proceedings; (4) his trial should be conducted in public; (5) he should be allowed a lawyer of his own choice or provided competent appointed counsel if he cannot afford to retain one (and all their dealings should be regarded as privileged, with reasonable provision made for them to consult regularly throughout the trial); (6) the defendant should neither be compelled to testify against himself nor be coerced to confess prior to trial, but he must have an opportunity to testify on his own behalf if he chooses to do so; (7) he must be afforded the opportunity to confront and question witnesses against him; (8) the court must ensure that some "equality of arms" exists between the defendant's side and those prosecuting his case (in, for example, their general level of resources and the time each side is given); (9) the prosecution must provide the defense any exculpatory evidence they discover in the course of their investigation or find afterward to be in their possession; and (10), as a general matter, the evidence against the defendant must have been obtained in a lawful manner, given the circumstances of the case. After the trial is held, (11) the judgment of the trial court must be written and must set out specifically the facts and laws on which the court reached its conclusions; and, finally (12), after the judgment is entered (or when necessary or useful during the course of trial), provision must be made for appeal to a higher court that is competent to address whatever legal issues the case may implicate. As it happens, probably the most controversial topic in the debate about trial fairness is whether to use a jury. My own view is that in the context of very lengthy, complex cases, especially those that turn on numerous difficult legal issues that involve little settled prior precedent, the arguments against juries are compelling. Similarly, that criminal trials be "speedy," another sacred idea, makes far less sense when both sides will require months of preparation to be effective in dealing with cases that are likely to involve hundreds of witnesses, many thousands of pages of documents, and relatively untried areas of law.

Although Milosevic is acting *pro se*, he is not unaided. Before the trial started, the prosecutors and the trial judges assumed that Milosevic might very well sit mutely at his table throughout the proceedings, a not unreasonable assumption given his early statements that he regarded the court as "illegal." In their determination that all relevant legal issues would be forcibly raised on his behalf during the course of the proceedings, the trial chambers appointed three seasoned attorneys (a British barrister, a Dutch attorney who had tried several prior cases at the Hague, and a Yugoslavian well acquainted with the complicated facts and politics of Yugoslavia's war years). Nominally, the three were designated as amici curiae—or friends of the court—who were expected to "assist" the court during the trial, but in fact they have functioned, albeit with a measure of restraint due to Milosevic's very active daily participation, as advocates wholly on the side of the accused, and not as disinterested expert advisers. In addition, Milosevic has two prominent Belgrade trial attorneys designated as his "associates," with whom he evidently consults after trial on a daily basis. Backed by their law firm's staff and, some claim, sympathetic souls within the current Belgrade government's security services, they prepare dossiers on prosecution witnesses, carefully sift through the vast quantity of discovery mat

/idence."[3] But one can glean clues to his sonality from the pro forma way in which usually greets the crime-based witnesses,



*INSIDE COURTROOM ONE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA, 2002*

rticularly those whose stories are the sadst. "I am sorry for what happened to you," 'll say, in a harsh baritone. Then, virtually without a pause, he'll add, "*if* it happened to you."

The International Tribunal for the Prosecution Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the rritory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 CTY) was established in May 1993, after near-four years of horrific news coverage fueled an impassioned worldwide public consensus that it was perative for the international community to *something*. Almost three years of diplomatic initiatives, U.N. special reports, various ultimatums, and the imposition of sanctions had failed to have any appreciable effect on the conflict in Yugoslavia, or, evidently, to make much of an impression on Yugoslavia's political and military leaders. When it became clear that neither the U.N. nor NATO was willing to mount an invasion force to *impose* peace, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 808, setting in motion the process for establishing an ad hoc tribunal to go after as criminals those responsible for violations of International Humanitarian Law in Yugoslavia.[4] It seems unlikely that initially anyone believed the top leadership of Serbia or Croatia would be brought to trial. Instead, it was hoped that the *threat* of prosecution could be part of a strategy that might put effective pressure on the parties to start complying in a more wholehearted

ls supplied by the Office of e Prosecutor, find news items evant to events, and, some rnalists guess, also consult gh-level Serb military and litical figures with personal owledge of the particulars of witness's testimony. onetheless, Milosevic sits by nself at the defendant's table, d it is likely he is purposeful-trying to convey the impresn that he is acting entirely his own, overmatched by e overwhelming resources of at he calls "the Other Side." is tactic, of course, plays ry nicely into the Serb myth the hero—stubborn, domitable, and courageous, rticularly when faced with rtain doom.

"Evidence," strictly speaking, is confined to the testimony of witnesses under oath and documents introduced at trial to the fact finder, whether judge or jury. The comments made by an advocate in the course of trial are not "evidence" but are instead meant to be regarded as no more than how a party to a proceeding would like the fact finder to interpret the data presented. But in a recent order issued by the Milosevic tribunal—ostensibly concerned only with procedure and the mechanics of the defendant's upcoming presentation of his side of the case—the court warned him that comments he might make in his advocate's capacity concerning "facts" of the case would be "considered." What exactly this means is, as yet, very much an open question.

International Humanitarian Law, or IHL, suggests that the conduct of conflict of any kind is of vital concern to us all, regardless of who is involved or where it occurs. Many of those who work in IHL believe that the twentieth century was by far the most brutal in recorded history, and feel that the record of crimes committed by governments against civilians provides strong evidence that IHL has been consistently violated "with impunity" from its genesis in the mid-nineteenth century, when Europe's Great Powers began to create rules and to write treaties in hopes of making war more humane. Many advocates of IHL believe that it will never be "law" until well-funded international institutions exist to investigate, apprehend, and try those who commit major IHL crimes. Critics of this vision, however, tend to dismiss IHL as being as unrealistic as disarmament efforts before and after World War I or the various attempts to declare war itself "unlawful." Regardless of your own point of view on what is "law," you can be sure that the legal advisers to armies and political leaders in the developed nations of the world are going to be very careful readers of the Tribunal's jurisprudence for some time to come.

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ed way with the will of the international community. But this first tribunal began to take on a life of its own and paved the way for establishing other IHL courts under the U.N.'s auspices. In November 1994 the Security Council passed Resolution 955, setting up a second, closely related ad hoc tribunal to deal with events in Rwanda (with jurisdiction over appeals from the two tribunals vested in a shared appellate division). And in the years since, the U.N. has set up other additional




A MASS GRAVE NEAR THE VILLAGE OF KALIMANOVICI, 2000

tribunals for East Timor and Sierra Leone. These have been created on a slightly different model than that of the Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals, the thinking being that justice would be better served if the courts were located within the country where the conflict had taken place and if at least some of the judges were nationals of the country concerned.

The ICTY is divided into three wholly separate, mostly harmonious entities: Chambers; Office of the Prosecutor (OTP); and the Regi whose function is not unlike that of a Clerk's fice in an American court but which also over many areas of responsibility usually well outside umbrella of a national court's operations, suc running the legal-aid program by which all defendants get legal counsel, seeing to all asp of the welfare of detainees on trial, and admi tering nearly every aspect of the Tribunal's relat with witnesses, including protection measures travel. In general, the prosecutors have rece most of the mainstream media's attention, be ning with Richard Goldstone, the influential charismatic South African Constitutional C justice, who took a leave of absence from his to accept an appointment as the Tribunal's prosecutor. Goldstone had the shrewd sens know that if the Tribunal did not remain in news, priming the world's indignation, the wi the international community to see the Trib become operational was almost certain to Chambers and the Registry, which both tend t comparatively reticent, may not always see ma from quite the same viewpoint as the Tribu prosecutor, whose statements, more often t not, tend to be what are quoted by journalist

During the ten years the ICTY has been in istence, it has completed, against many less d brated defendants, a score of trials that are b to have lasting importance, first in establishin specific judicial facts of what happened in goslavia between 1991 and 2000 but also potentially of far greater importance) in es lishing exactly what kind of conduct within context of armed conflict actually constitutes example, Genocide, Crimes Against Humani and Grave Breaches of the Geneva Conventio

The question of where or how IHL crimes ought to be tried has long been a subject of debate. When the U.N. was first created following the Second World War, it had been hoped that a permanent criminal court could be established to carry on the legacy of the war-crimes trials at Nuremberg. Such a court, it was thought, would be the first step in creating "an enforcement mechanism" for a comprehensive legal scheme to protect civilians in future from both the threat of "total" war and any systematic domestic campaign of persecution. By 1993 this planned court had been stalled in obscure U.N. committees for a little more than four decades, and the idea of setting up ad hoc forums by using the Security Council's emergency powers was regarded as the only way of cutting through the unavoidable red tape that pursuing the matter in the General Assembly would have involved. A version of the original U.N. plan, although no longer technically under the umbrella of U.N. operations, has at last been realized in the International Criminal Court, or ICC, created by a multinational treaty concluded in Rome in 1998. This treaty was ratified in record time, and the ICC currently has ninety-two state parties, the United States conspicuously not among them. Last spring the ICC appointed its first eighteen judges, and last summer it swore in its first prosecutor and registrar.

The term "Genocide" was coined in the 1940s by one Raphael Lemkin, a Polish legal crusader who lobbied tirelessly for what became the U.N.'s 1948 Genocide Convention. The convention declared that persecuting an ethnic or religious group with the object of destroying it was subject to criminal punishment under international law, even when such persecution is carried out wholly within national borders—whether or not during a time of conflict or exclusively against a domestic population. The concept that "laws of humanity and the dictates of the public conscience" applied to conduct during conflict seems to have had its first formal recognition in the preamble to The Hague Convention of 1907, "Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land." The related term "Crimes Against Humanity" began to gain currency during the Allies' discussions of th posal, following World War try Germany's Kaiser Wilhe before an international tribu of five judges for "a suprem fense against international ity and the sanctity of treati "Grave Breaches of the Ge Conventions" were first def in 1949 (in Article 147 of vention IV), when, in the a math of World War II, the ment of civilians became an urgent concern among gove ments. These breaches inc with qualifications, killing, ture (including biological e mentation), deportation, co ment, compelling service in armed forces of a hostile po taking hostages, the destruc and appropriation of proper and depriving "a protected son" of the right to a fair tr



Photograph © Damir Sagolj/Reute

addition, the cases that the Tribunal has decided beginning to create a body of specific blackter law[7] and to provide some general guidance out just who, in addition to those who have ually been physically involved in committing ocities, may be held personally accountable for L crimes—either because crimes were comtted on their orders; because they are deemed complices on the basis of their assistance to ose directly involved before, during, or after ents; or under some theory of "command reonsibility,"[8] which, as a matter of far-reaching gal precedent, may develop into the Milosevic case's most significant and controversial issue.

In terms of the sheer quantity of information at is freely made available, in remarkably rapid ne, it is difficult to complain about the ICTY, nich puts any U.S. court to shame. You can dily access all 30,000 pages of the transcript of e trial's first eighteen months (though a comratively small number of pages are redacted to eserve the confidentiality of "protected witsses," who are believed to be in some immint personal danger for coming to testify at tri- as well as the half-dozen decisions made by the ibunal's appellate chamber in the case, espeally those from January and February 2002, nich determined that Milosevic's trial would be ld in a single long proceeding instead of being vided into two shorter ones, as originally nned. You can obtain a copy of the three-part, 3-page indictment, and with it the prosecus' initial 50-page pretrial brief concerning the nflict in Kosovo between January and June 99 as well as their 306-page pretrial brief concerning earlier conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia between 1991 and 1995.

Also available are any of roughly 200 decisions and orders that the Milosevic trial court has already issued, some on comparatively minor questions such as scheduling but many others of crucial importance (such as that concerning the events contributing to Yugoslavia's disintegration, which the court has already decided to accept as "adjudicated facts"). Then there are the judgments of other Tribunal cases. Among the most important of these is *Prosecutor* v. *Dusko Tadic*, decided in May 1997. Tadic, a zealous Bosnian Serb nationalist, was a small-town café owner who worked as a policeman following the Serb takeover of the Prijedor District in 1992. During his off-hours, he was a regular visitor to the three detention camps in the area—Omarska, Keraterm, and Trnopolje—and participated on numerous occasions in sadistic beatings and torture of the mainly Muslim inmates of Omarska, the most notorious of the three camps. He was also involved in the local "cleansing" campaign, though it is unclear to what extent. The case remains important to tribunal jurisprudence because it dealt with such fundamental issues as the "legality" of the Tribunal's creation, the logic of its jurisdiction, and the protection of witnesses. The Tribunal also had to determine, for the first time, the basic narrative of what had happened in Yugoslavia.

The problem for anyone attempting to follow the Milosevic trial is that institutional "transparency" does not necessarily imply that whatever is made available to the public is also readily intelligible. The daunting volume of what is available can seem anything but helpful if you are seeking to make some general sense of the Tri-

The term refers to legal principles that are fundamental and ll settled, and has come to an what the law is rather than at it should be. "Blackletter" rives from the custom of nting medieval books in a avy Gothic black type.

As anyone who remembers e Watergate scandal will call, the key questions were: hat did Nixon know and nen did he know it? bviously, when a superior plicitly orders a subordinate commit a crime, the matter his guilt is fairly straightforard. But in many situations mmon to criminal law and to ril liability as well, a superi's culpability or vicarious liaity is based on what he ould have reasonably done or own, regardless of what he did do or did know. In consequence, he may be held responsible for what a subordinate does that is ultra vires—beyond his power—and what, at least nominally, he has expressly forbidden that subordinate to do. Although many legal cultures speak of "facts" and "law" as existing at a remove from each other, important questions can turn on their interrelation. If, in the Milosevic case, the trial court determines that he personally directed a decade of "ethnic cleansing" campaigns, the legal implications of the court's decision may well prove much less far-reaching than if a conviction turns primarily on the idea that either (1) he could have stopped what was going on but failed to do so; or (2) regardless of what he actually ordered or wished, he should be held personally and criminally accountable because he possessed ultimate formal (de jure) or actual (de facto) "command responsibility" for the acts of organized armed forces that he and his government supported and "controlled" in only a general way. Such an outcome would be a source of considerable anxiety to almost every national leader on earth.

The main thrust of Tadic's strategy was simple alibi, and he contended throughout his trial that prosecution witnesses had wrongly identified him, or that he was never present at any of the crimes they described. Following the Tadic trial, both sides appealed. The Appellate Chamber's decision is especially significant in its discussion of whether the conflict in Bosnia was "internal" or "international" for purposes of determining the application of the 1949 Geneva Conventions' "Grave Breaches" provisions. The trial court had decided that the conflict was "international" up until May 1992 and "internal" thereafter. This conclusion was premised on Belgrade's formal "withdrawal" of its armed forces, the JNA, from Bosnia in response to an ultimatum issued by the U.N. Security Council. The withdrawal, however, took place mainly on paper and consisted of dividing the JNA into a Serbian "VJ" and a legally distinct Bosnian Serb "VRS" army. In reality, the men and the weapons Belgrade had sent to Bosnia remained, and virtually the only change was one of name and uniform.

bunal's work and mission as a whole, and particularly if you are trying to understand where the enterprise of international criminal justice might be going. I suspected there was much about the current rapid development of this area of law that I was failing to grasp, at least beyond a general sense that its importance had been growing at a surprising rate and that the Yugoslavia Tribunal had been a catalyst. The only thing to do was to visit The Hague, where the Tribunal is located, and see if any of the people who worked there would speak with me. My hope was that if I could get a handle on some of the more practical concerns in the decision to try Milosevic, I might begin to get some sense of the world's future prospects for bringing its many other Milosevics to justice.

In the week before my departure I was determined to seek out at least a few of the many Americans who had spent time working at the Tribunal. Like other organs of the United Nations, the rules that apply to the ICTY provide that no two of the current sixteen permanent judges may be nationals of the same country. Once I reached The Hague, I hoped I might be able meet the current American judge at the Tribunal, Theodor Meron, a distinguished scholar who has taught International Humanitarian Law for many years at the NYU law school. But since a number of people I had spoken to had claimed that the Tribunal's existence, at least during its early years, had been possible only because of strong—albeit far from unanimous—behind-the-scenes U.S. support (especially from Madeleine Albrigh , at the U.N. and later as secretary of state), I also, accordingly, eager to meet Meron's Am can predecessors. The most recent had been tricia Wald, for twenty years one of the most spected judges of the Washington, D.C., Fed Court of Appeals. Before Wald, there had b Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, a former federal c trial judge from Texas, who had been one of first eleven judges appointed to the Tribuna 1993 as it began operations. Like Meron, Donald had been president of the Tribunal (f 1997 to 1999), which gave me ample reaso hope her overview and knowledge of the f years would be enlightening.

Since McDonald was coming to New York a few days, she agreed to lunch, suggesting t the dining room of the Regency Hotel on P Avenue, called The Library, was both quiet congenial at midday. I knew comparatively li about McDonald, except that much of career had been spent as a top civil-rights liti tor in private practice in Houston, specializ in class-action lawsuits, and that when she been appointed to the U.S. District Court 1979, at the tender age of thirty-seven, she only the third African-American woman to appointed to the federal bench, and the f from Texas. Since I had worked as a law cle after graduating from the Yale law school in t early 1980s, I hoped that my background mig help me avoid at least a little of the underlyi condescension that experts usually find u avoidable in their conversations with lay peo about specialized subjects.

The Library, as it turned out, was aptly nam if your idea of libraries includes a large color te vision (with the sound turned down, tuned CNN) and you regard books with the disda implicit in the professional decorator's termin ogy, which refers to them as "furniture." Still was, as McDonald had said, the perfect setting conversation. While I waited, Saddam Husse flashed on the screen above me and mute co mentators standing in front of brightly color

Each year, one task of the Tribunal's president—a judge, elected, for a two-year term, by his or her peers—is to write an annual report addressed to both the U.N. Security Council and the General Assembly. Reports from the Tribunal's early years in operation are instructive, and the first year's report especially is both candid and surprisingly plaintive. The Security Council's commitment to making the Tribunal a robust entity with a staff and resources adequate to perform its job appears, in retrospect, to have been decidedly halfhearted. Initially, the Tribunal was funded in six-month cycles, with an initial start-up commitment of just $5.6 million for the January to June 1994 period. Evidently, the choice of a six-month fiscal period had the unfortunate consequence of preventing the Tribunal from signing a lease on property for a headquarters and proved a serious impediment to recruitment, since no contract for more than half a year could be promised to anyone. By the Tribunal's second year, much of this had been sorted out, and its overall funding had been increased to more than $25 million a year, with authorization for some 260 posts. But initially, the charity of a number of states making "voluntary contributions" had been crucial. The United States supplied the Office of the Prosecutor with a $2.3 million computer system and temporarily reassigned twenty-two professional staff members to work without salary from the Tribunal for up to two years. Other nations joined in with similar offers of voluntary staff a gifts in kind, while some, incl ing Malaysia and Pakistan, w both had judges appointed to serve at the Tribunal, sent cas (in the amounts of $2 million and $1 million, respectively). present, the Tribunal's annual budget is in the region of $12 million a year, a very significa share of the U.N.'s non-peace keeping expenditure. And the Tribunal's staff has grown to some 1,300, who come from eighty-three different U.N. member states.



BODIES OF ETHNIC ALBANIANS LIE IN A MOSQUE AFTER A MASSACRE IN THE VILLAGE OF RACAK, SOUTHERN KOSOVO, 1999

ps of the Middle East tried to explain to view- where in a general way Iraq was located. McDonald is tall and slim and possessed of an ıost offhand elegance. The hint of cultivat- Texas mixed into her accent gives her voice agreeable music. I asked about the Tribunal's t years, and she told me that the key had :n the remarkable enthusiasm of the small and very able group who had taken posts at the start. Nearly everyone involved, she explained, believed that they were part of an "important and noble enterprise" they were determined to make work. When she'd first arrived, the Tribunal had only the temporary use of a small office in the Peace Palace[12] (where the U.N.'s International Court of Justice is based), and a

Much has been written of late ut bringing Hussein and his lieutenants to trial as "war ninals," presuming of course y are captured alive. Those o have some say in the matter uld do well to study the Milo- ic proceedings. The several rs of both direct and indirect paration involved in, for ex- ple, marshaling adequate ad- ssible evidence and finding nesses is but one issue. Oth- include whose notion of a ir" trial will prevail, and ether the trial is to deal with ıost twenty-five years of Inter- ional Humanitarian Law and man-rights abuses or ought to a brief proceeding limited in scope. If the latter, victims' ilies are certain to raise pas- nate objections. A trial of broad scope, on the other hand, would undoubtedly drag on for several years. And it is quite easy to imagine that much would be made of active U.S. support of Hussein's regime during the country's conflict with Iran, that the "legality" of the United States invasion would be vigorously contested by the defendant(s), and that every effort possible would be made to play to the region's anti-American audience, portraying Hussein as both a martyr struggling to defend Islam from the West and something of a pawn, turned upon and betrayed by his former ally, the United States. Doubtless, too, some attempt would be made not only to portray the current Bush agenda for the Middle East in a sinister light but also to implicate the United States during the period prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, perhaps even in the role of an accomplice that supplied and trained Hussein's armed forces while turning a blind eye to IHL crimes they were fully aware of and might have done something to prevent.

The Peace Palace fulfills the Victorian era's canon that it is always a good idea to decorate the decoration. The building, which was inaugurated with great fanfare on August 28, 1913, required almost ten years to complete and was to be the seat of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which was created under the auspices of The Hague Peace Conference of 1899 and its Hague Convention I, "For the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes." The building's costs were paid in their entirety by the Scottish-American steel magnate turned philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who had an unshakable faith in what was once termed "progress" and believed the inexorable path of humanity toward perfection was as incontestably part of the scheme of things as Darwin's law of natural selection. Peace was Carnegie's great cause in his later years, and the "Temple of Peace" at The Hague was only one of three he managed to complete before the outbreak of World War I's hostilities suggested that progress toward perfection might not be quite so inexorable as all that.

tograph © AP/Wide World Photos



THE BUILDING THAT HOUSES THE U.N. IN THE HAGUE (REAR VIEW)

1993) but charged barely more than four months later. Accordingly, with no immediate prospect for any defendants being transferred into the custody of the Tribunal, the group of eleven judges, including McDonald, had begun their work by drafting detailed rules of procedure which would embody contemporary international standards for fair trial and humane detention of persons accused of crimes. This was a momentous undertaking. The only predecessor of the Tribunal had been the Nuremberg proceedings (along with a string of important war crimes trials that followed, held in Germany under American auspices between 1947 and 1949) and a trial somewhat similar to Nuremberg held in Tokyo of Japanese leaders. In both of these cases, the rules of procedure adopted had been fairly cursory and, at least at the Tokyo tribunal, had vitiated any claim to basic trial fairness. McDonald enlisted the help of

ria, China, Canada, Australia, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, and France—their first impression she admits, was, "It's so *American*."

As for the length, complexity, and costs of trials at the Tribunal, a recurring subject of criticism, McDonald pointed out that, in an international trial, some costs, such as translation of both documents and live testimony, are obviously unavoidable. We talked about what she had been proud of during her tenure at the Tribunal. She explained that, although rape—when carried out on a widespread and systematic basis—had been specifically made part of the statute that created the Tribunal and had been defined as a "war crime," prosecutors had not initially paid much attention to crimes against civilian women per se. This, said McDonald, is no longer true, and the Tribunal's cases are increasingly regarded as significant and pioneering precedent for what

To give one example, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, as it was called, was made up of eleven judges, drawn from each of the countries involved in that theater of conflict. It was a complex case brought against twenty-eight high-ranking Japanese defendants, and the proceeding, described at the time as "the biggest trial in recorded history," lasted from April 1946 until November 1948. Since the judges were not required to attend the proceedings on a daily basis (and many chose not to, even for weeks at a stretch), the Tribunal's rulings on crucial questions like the admissibility of evidence demonstrably varied from day to day, depending entirely on which judges were or were not present. In the end, five of the eleven judges wrote dissenting or partially dissenting opinions. Astonishingly, the Tokyo judgment remained unpublished until 1977 (when it appeared in an Amsterdam university press monograph). Prior to 1977, the majority opinion and five dissents could be read only by seeking out a handful of surviving stenciled copies.

At present, the expectation is that the Tribunal will not wind up its affairs before 2012. If its present docket and annual budget are projected forward, it is not unreasonable to guess that at the end of its eighteen years in existence the Tribunal will have tried approximately 100 cases at a total cost of more than $1.5 billion. This figure provides at least some sense of the scale and cost of what it is possible for an international criminal tribunal to do. Today the prevailing vi among prosecutors and others with whom I've spoken is tha before indictments are sought is essential to understand a c flict as a whole and only then target those who have played the largest part or most cruci roles in events. To deal with t many thousands of other pot tial defendants, rebuilding, o helping to create, smoothly functioning domestic courts i an essential task that must be part of the larger picture wit which the international comm nity is concerned.

...now emerging as a significant imperative in International Humanitarian Law.

Whatever your expectations, the anonymous, three-story, rough white-brick building housing the ICTY is almost certain to disappoint. The Tribunal's immediate neighborhood, about half an hour's ride on the Number 1 tram from The Hague's historic center of tiled streets, brick churches, bicycle paths, canals, parks, palaces, small shops, embassies, museums, elegant Old World government buildings, and understated luxury hotels, is a mildly run-down, vaguely suburban, mixed-use zone of residential, commercial, and industrial structures. You might be in nearly any dull and dreary city nearly anywhere in northern Europe.

Originally built in the Churchillplein Plaza as the corporate headquarters of the Aegon Insurance Company, the ICTY building dates from the early 1950s and suggests a predisposition for the neoclassical simplicity of the Italian Fascist period. Probably the most immediately striking feature of the Churchillplein is not the Tribunal but the Congresgebouw's football-field-size fountain and the illuminated advertising sign hawking sugar-dusted *Donuts on Ice* and *The Sound of Music*. The Tribunal, in contrast, takes low-key discretion to an extreme, and the only hint of what goes on inside is an enormous satellite dish atop the roof and the pale blue U.N. flag hanging limply on a flagpole in front of the building's black iron gateway. It is easy to miss.

In theory, any interested member of the public is allowed to attend Tribunal trials. But security is tight. You present yourself at a guardhouse some twenty feet away from the building, show your passport to a uniformed U.N. officer sitting in a booth, and obtain your blue or pink ticket, duly stamped with the date and indicating your status as "VIP" Press or Visitor for some combination thereof. Then you walk through a metal detector sensitive enough to be triggered by no more than the combination of a watch, a small belt buckle, and the metal eyelets of shoes, so you must empty your pockets and begin the whole ritual again.

Once inside the building, you undergo security screening a second time before you are allowed to go upstairs to the visitors' gallery of Courtroom One, which is occupied most mornings by the Milosevic trial. There are usually few spectators present—from less than ten to around fifty, depending on whether something new or noteworthy is going on. All Tribunal courtrooms are rigged with cameras in surveillance style, and most offices in the Tribunal building have televisions that allow access to the court's closed-circuit system. Almost no one, except the members of Milosevic's Belgrade defense team, stays for the duration of the session. At the entrance, you will see a rack of radio transmitters, and unless you are fluent in English, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian—"B/C/S," as it is called here, with a nicely politic sense of recent history—and Albanian, you'll want to take one. Earphones, neatly coiled are to be found at each of the gallery's hundred or so chairs.

Earphones, you soon realize, are worn by everyone, not just visitors. Although translators remain unseen at the Tribunal—they occupy a booth with one-way glass on the left wall of the courtroom—most often it is their voices that you, the judges, and the prosecutors hear. This is a matter of some significance, since in a trial setting such as Milosevic's turned on a judge's opportunity to experience and assess "the demeanor" of a witness and how he or she sounds when speaking.

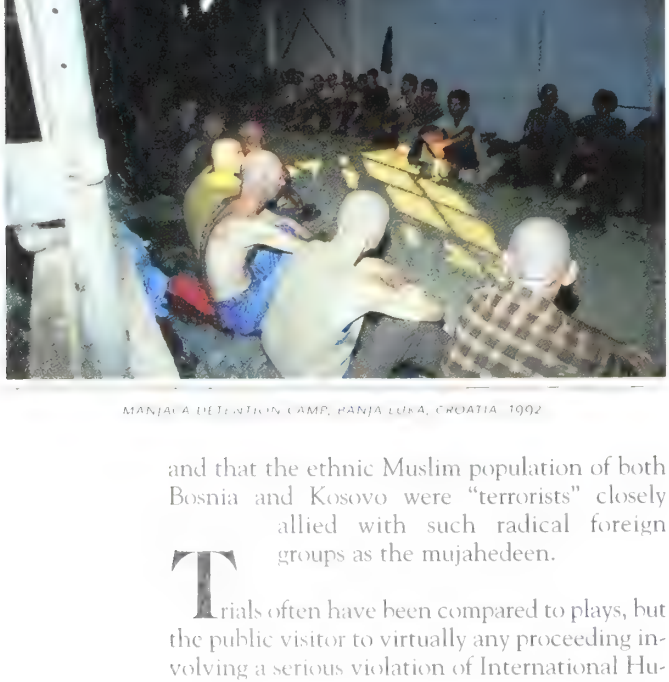
The day of my arrival should have been an especially exciting one to watch. One of the court's most highly placed political "murder" officially known at the time only as "Witness C-065" and beginning the third of eleven days of

In addition to the live broadcast feed to the Internet, there is a daily archive of the feed compiled by Bard College that can be freely accessed by the public. At least one U.S. university is digitizing video archives of all the Tribunal proceedings.

Roughly a dozen journalists regularly use the press room in the Tribunal building, the majority of whom are from former Yugoslavia.

In terms of the appeals process, proceedings between the trial court and the court of appeals (which is also charged with deciding sentencing and other matters of judicial discretion) are conducted [illegible] court's opportunity to assess witnesses is often key for example, in the federal court system of the United States, and in most state courts as well. Despite the most unusual circumstances for when confronted with the most blatant case of [illegible] appellate courts defer [illegible] to whatever "facts" the trial court has determined. Part of the basis of the policy, and is routinely justified in that trial judges have actually seen and heard the witnesses, and transcripts can never adequately convey enough about the person on the stand for anyone who wasn't present to confidently [illegible] the court's

testimony about the founding within Croatia of the separatist Serb statelet of Krajina in the early 1990s. The hope was that Witness C-061 might provide crucial evidence for establishing both Milosevic's personal involvement as a matter of fact and his "intent" as a matter of law. The prosecutors contend that the so-called Log Revolution—the harbinger of the rapid fragmentation of Yugoslavia into increasingly polarized, antagonistic ethnic groups and a decade of savage conflict—was not a spontaneous grass-roots movement but a carefully planned set of events, fueled by propaganda and orchestrated on Milosevic's orders—or, at the least, carried on with his knowledge, approval, and help. Milosevic's control of Serbia's media, and his use of it as an instrument of state for demoralizing his enemies while bolstering the morale of combatants, as well as a means of persuading his constituency, is an important part of the prosecutors' case. In the event that the trial court decides that Milosevic's propaganda campaign constituted conduct they deem criminal in nature, a great many thorny issues about the relationship between a country's press and its government's war effort will need to be more squarely faced than they have been in the past. It is important to bear in mind that prior to and during Yugoslavia's period of conflict, the rhetoric of Belgrade, presented to its citizens in the form of news reports and government intelligence, suggested that Croatia was mounting a campaign of genocide against all ethnic Serbs,



MANJACA DETENTION CAMP, BANJA LUKA, CROATIA, 1992

and that the ethnic Muslim population of both Bosnia and Kosovo were "terrorists" closely allied with such radical foreign groups as the mujahedeen.

Trials often have been compared to plays, but the public visitor to virtually any proceeding involving a serious violation of International Humanitarian Law will experience something mo like a "set visit" to a major Hollywood movi You will see, even over the course of sever lengthy days, only a small, frequently dull or my tifying piece of a long and complex story, an unless you've read the script with care (which to say, the indictment), you will have absolute no idea where the piece you've seen belongs. I the Milosevic case, the last-minute joinder three separate indictments has made it excee ingly difficult for an observer to follow the tria basic narrative. It was determined that Kosov the first of the three indictments filed (chron logically, the historic third act of Milosevic's p litical career), should be the first part of the pro ecution's case; the case against the accused f crimes committed in Croatia (Act I) and Bosn (Act II) would be presented afterward. Witne C-061 figured at a comparatively early stage in t chronology of Yugoslavia's breakup, so the idea ap parently was to use his testimony about his ro in helping to create and run Krajina, and th contact he'd had with "Belgrade," to show th Milosevic had instigated or been an early party events. Since Milosevic has consistently claime that he was defending or supporting his fello Serbs against ethnically motivated violence, an not leading a campaign instigated by Serbs again others, a number of journalists were optimist cally predicting that C-061 might prove to b the case's "smoking gun." Maybe C-061's test mony wouldn't cause Milosevic to break down open court and confess, but it was thought th a face-to-face confrontation between the tw "co-perpetrators" might undermine Milosevic version of events. Before the end of his first wee on the stand, C-061, in response to four days Milosevic's taunting cross-examination, mad the dramatic decision to give up his status as a pr tected witness and reveal that he was—as mo journalists covering the trial had assumed—M lan Babic, at various times the president, prim minister, and foreign-affairs minister of Krajin

It is difficult to infer exactly what sort trial the prosecutors originally hoped to brin Their indictment against Milosevic for H crimes in Croatia is confined to counts Crimes Against Humanity, Grave Breaches the Geneva Conventions, and Violations the Laws or Customs of War. In this indic ment, although fifteen other participants a named in "the joint criminal enterpris Milosevic is the sole defendant, implying, as fact is the case, an intention to try him on h own. The Kosovo Indictment, however, nam him and four others as defendants, implyi the intention to hold a trial more li Nuremberg, in which top ministers and mi tary leaders would share the docket. Th Bosnia Indictment, on the other hand, is mu



Photograph © Paul Hosefros/SIPA P

same as the Croatia Indictment, though an litional count of Genocide is added. losevic's fourteen key co-participants are ned in this indictment, but he is charged as case's sole defendant. Many of those who named in the three indictments, such as neral Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic, ve also been charged in other indictments. nsequently, they are fugitives whom all N. member states are under obligation to est and transfer to The Hague if found with- their territory. Others, such as Biljana vsic (Karadzic's successor as president of snia's separatist Serb republic), have chosen surrender to the Tribunal—and in Plavsic's e, pursuant to a plea bargain, she has eady pleaded guilty and been sentenced. ll others, including Croatian president njo Tudjman and the notorious paramili- y leader Arkan, are dead.

Time is probably the most important recur- g issue in the case. And Milosevic's decision represent himself, his regular exercising of "right" to equal time for cross-examina- n, and his bouts of chronic illness have in mbination given him a crude but effective ategic advantage. He almost certainly has ncluded that there is little chance he will be nd innocent of all sixty-six counts of the lictments against him, and realizes that con- tion for any one of them carries the proba- ity of a long prison term. Since he is now ty-two years old, even a moderate sentence uld be for all practical purposes a life sen- nce. From his point of view, the only thing at will change when his trial is concluded is status from that of an accused, presumed nocent and in detention, to that of a convict ving a prison term. Accordingly, he has ery incentive to drag the trial on for as many ars as possible. Each day Milosevic can fill or ve cancelled because of illness is potentially e day fewer for the prosecutors to present eir case in all its detail. And the net result, eady plainly evident, is that a far less com- ehensive case will be made against him in e end.

The case's lead prosecutor, Geoffrey Nice, is British barrister with long experience in both minal cases and extremely complex civil lit- ation, and when in court he displays an easy mmand of the logic and details of his case, the applicable law, apposite Tribunal precedent, and the subtleties of the Tribunal's continuously evolving trial procedure. Moreover, he seems attuned to the practical wisdom of the old litigator's saying, "It is better to know



MILOSEVIC ENTERS THE COURTROOM, 2001

the judge than it is to know the law." In more than a year of watching the case, I have never seen him ruffled in any way by tough questions from the bench, though he is entirely capable of purposefully showing his exasperation at rulings he feels unwise or that have not gone his way. Nice is small, lithe, and dark-haired, and unlike his "learned colleague" Steven Kay (the barrister usually leading the team of amici appointed to raise legal arguments on Milosevic's behalf), Nice does not wear the barrister's traditional white-powdered wig to court, though, like everyone else in the room, except the court reporters and guards, he does wear black robes and the starched white collar, or "bib."[15] If I have a cavil about Nice, it has little to do with the substance of his skills or the thoroughness of his preparation and only to do with his courtroom manner and the style of his advocacy. Always at pains to cast his argument or request in solicitous terms of how the OTP might better or more fully be of "assistance" to the bench, he reminds me of the various head boys I instinctively disliked at boarding school.

Whether and in what ways s matters is a question that es to the root of how IHL trials or should be different from den-variety criminal ones. If goal is, as it was at Nurem- g, to assemble a somewhat complete historic record of events, create a comprehensive documentary archive for posterity, and vindicate the stories of survivors and victims that had seemed too horrible to be plausible, then strict time limits are a major failing. If the idea is primarily, as one seasoned American ICTY prosecutor phrased it, "to get the bad guy," then a conviction on one count, which results in a life sentence, is as good as a conviction for sixty-six counts.

"Bibs" and robes are required for counsel making court appearances. To buy, bibs cost an astonishing 450 euros but may be rented from the Tribunal at 150 euros a month (with an option to purchase).

tograph © Reuters NewMedia Inc./CORBIS

Dermot Groome, the American lawyer who has most often appeared in court on the prosecution team, is tall, blond, broad-shouldered, and always well prepared, poised in direct examination and possessed of a canny ability to zero in on what of consequence has really been put at issue in the



STEVEN KAY, ACTING ON MILOSEVIC'S BEHALF (TOP LEFT); PRESIDING JUDGE RICHARD MAY (TOP RIGHT); NEWLY NOMINATED JUDGES, 2001 (BOTTOM)

course of Milosevic's cross-examination. He has been in charge of the Bosnia phase of the case, and he is skilled at quickly making a few brief, big, and straightforward points during redirect.

Hildegard Uertz-Retzlaff, a third principal member of the prosecution team who regularly appears in court, is addressed by Milosevic as "...Lady on the Opposite Side," a mix of outward gentlemanliness and pointed condescension that is clearly meant to be irritating. Since the Croatia charges are her part of the case, it falls to her, on the morning I arrive, to examine Witness C-06. Perhaps because English is not her first language or because she is from Germany, a civil-law country where trials are conducted on a non-adversarial basis, she is noticeably less smooth on her feet than her two colleagues, and her deliberate, step-by-step style is sometimes frustratingly slow. Unlike Nice, Uertz-Retzlaff can be rattled when things go wrong—and particularly by the almost thespian displays of pique of presiding judge Richard May, who clearly sees hurrying matters along as a key part of his role in the management of trial time.

Judge May is strict but scrupulously fair, almost preternatural in his understanding of human weakness and wickedness in every guise, impatient, very rarely fooled, and as quietly capable a criminal court judge as I have ever seen. Even Milosevic seems to grudgingly afford him a measure of respect. His memory and grasp of detail in the case presented thus far is often tested and displayed, especially when Milosevic on cross-examination tries to sum up or restate a witness's prior testimony for purposes of posing a leading question. Whenever May feels Milosevic has crossed the boundary from recasting data in an advantageous light into genuine misstatement, he pulls out his handwritten notes, almost instantly locates the testimony alluded to—from hours, days, or weeks earlier—and corrects Milosevic with verbatim quotation.

The two other judges sitting on the Milosevic case, Patrick Robinson of Jamaica and O-Gon Kwon of South Korea, also are jurists of impressive prior accomplishment

In major American criminal trials, in contrast to British practice, prosecution witnesses typically undergo extensive "preparation," or rehearsal, so that there will be few surprises when they testify, both on direct examination and subsequent cross-examination. The OTP does not seem to have a clear policy on whether such preparation is important, in accordance with the American view, or wholly improper, in line with British thinking. What is clear is that in most trials at the ICTY, at least some of the live witnesses either have not been entirely candid about themselves with the lawyers who have called them to testify or have changed their stories in unexpected ways from an earlier version. To a certain extent, even in legal systems where trial preparation is extensive, this is a problem that a seasoned trial attorney must allow for. But at the Hague, three factors aggravate the situation. First, the problem of witness intimidation has not been wholly solved by the ICTY's efforts at witness protection; second, the OTP, and often defense teams too (particularly that assisting Milosevic), have become remarkably skillful at rapidly assembling detailed personal dossiers about witnesses that frequently contain unflattering information useful to undermining "credibility" on cross-examination; and third, given the horrific events involved, and the fact that many who have lived to tell their tale were not disinterested bystanders, Tribunal trial judges often have the unenviable task of deciding how much to accept the truthfulness of a witness who is plainly lying about, or at the least minimizing, his own role. These problems are important to note, especially in the context of the ICTY's debate over using written statements as a time-saving alternative to live testimony.

A visit to Slobodan-Milosevic.org, which offers a daily summary of the trial, is instructive. For example, the view of a recent day of "crin based" testimony attacks Ma as being both unfair and inc petent: "After President Milosevic had explained, to t pathetic excuse of a 'judge,' concept of 'innocent until proven guilty,' which appear be completely foreign to 'Di. May, Mr. Tapuskovic [one o the trial's amici] had to expl to this idiot what his job wa the first place. Mr. Tapusko explained to that crimson robe–wearing fool that as a judge his job is to sit and lis to the evidence and then decide, after hearing all of t evidence, if the witness is telling the truth or not."

Photographs © SIPA Press (top left); AP/W World Photos (top right); and CORBIS SYGMA (bott

or to his appointment as a judge of the ICTY, binson devoted much of his legal career to L and human-rights concerns, frequently act- as his country's ambassador and/or negotia- on treaties. He is also an experienced prose- or and was for several years a deputy solicitor neral of Jamaica. He is the most empathetic he three judges, and his questioning suggests sees as paramount the victims' viewpoint as ll as that of the criminal defendants. Of the ee judges, he is the most skeptical of Nice's ious proposals to assist the bench and speed the trial, and the most consistently solicitous Milosevic's health. Judge Kwon, the youngest the three judges, holds a 1985 graduate law gree from Harvard and was a rapidly rising icial star in Korea before his appointment to ICTY. Appointed senior judge in the Seoul strict in 1999, he was elevated to senior presiding judge in the Taegu High Court in 2000.

The morning moves slowly. From the visi- s' gallery what appears in transcripts as sever- blank redacted pages translates into long idle lls of pantomime colloquies. Today about y Dutch soldiers in uniform are in the gallery, t it is the group of Milosevic's Belgrade legal sociates" who catch nearly everyone's atten- n. This includes three women who remind of Charlie's Angels. C-061, like all protect- witnesses, is completely screened off from gallery. The glass wall separating the court- om from the gallery has an accordionlike een divided into three sections that extends entire length of the room. Although the ntral section is lowered to block all view of otected witnesses, the other two are not. cordingly, even when the court goes into osed session" and the feed of microphones, nslations, and cameras is turned off, you can ll see most of what is happening.

Uertz-Retzlaff has decided to use C-061 to ntify the voices on a series of some fifty inter- pted cellular-phone conversations that the TP is offering as evidence of Milosevic's per- nal involvement in events. Of them all, it is nversations between Milosevic and Radovan radzic, the long-term leader of the breakaway Bosnian Serb republic, who is under indictment and still at large, about which anticipation is keenest. Since Witness C-061 was not a participant in the calls, was not physically present to overhear them when they took place, and was not the person who recorded them, the Milosevic amici have raised objections, and the court has invited each of the parties to orally amplify their various prior written "submissions" about the admissibility of the intercepts. After a Ms. Higgins speaks on behalf of the amici, it is Milosevic's turn. He contends in forceful terms that the intercepts were illegally obtained and perhaps subsequently doctored, then asks how the witness can possibly "confirm the authenticity of conversations between me and a third person." Nice, however, has the final word. He argues that, as a general matter, it makes better sense for evidence under challenge in this way to be "*provisionally* admitted" when it is clear that more evidence will be forthcoming by which the first piece of evidence can be properly weighed and its admissibility and value assessed.

When the trial resumes after a twenty-minute recess (taken so that the members of the bench can discuss in chambers how they will proceed), Judge May announces that the court deems the intercept recordings admissible on "a prima facie" basis, but stresses that at a later time the OTP will have to submit further evidence about the circumstances under which the recordings were made. The court seems to be conceding, at least tacitly, that it may have to face the question of to what extent the initial "legality" of what is essentially a wiretap during conditions of conflict or war should be a factor in either admitting such evidence in the first place or assessing its reliability or "weight" once admitted.

Unfortunately for the gallery, it soon becomes clear that Uertz-Retzlaff does not propose to play the tapes in their entirety in open court, since, she explains, "that would take approximately two days." Instead, she suggests that it would be more expeditious to play just enough of several tapes so that the voices can be identified; and that instead of having the witness listen to each intercept—something he has obviously already done—she

In the United States, allowing neras into courtrooms has fired ntentious debate since the rise television and the advent of dern mass media in the 1950s. ne scholar I spoke to, who has tched the Tribunal with inter- since its founding, felt strong- that cameras in courtrooms foundly affect proceedings. s view is that when people know there is a camera present, they can't help but perform. There may be some truth to this. I have difficulty, however, discerning much difference between the effect of the presence of cameras and that of what might be called "a live studio audience."

In common law, in a criminal trial before a jury, the submission of evidence follows strict rules. In a U.S. criminal trial, the Fourth Amendment prohibition against "unreasonable searches and seizures" can be of crucial importance, and the twentieth-century judicial enforcement mechanism by which evidence can be excluded from consideration if obtained by prosecutors illegally is popularly known as the "fruits of the poison tree" doctrine. Accordingly, in a U.S. trial where wiretap evidence is offered, an able defense lawyer typically hones in on the question of where, how, by whom, and under what legitimating authority recorded intercepts of a defendant's telephone conversations were obtained.

will submit a written "declaration" made by C-061 in the course of his prior two-day listening session. This she requests be placed "under seal," which is to say, not as part of the public record.

Unfortunately for Uertz-Retzlaff, nothing proceeds smoothly. The "index of intercepts" she has prepared to "assist" the bench is for some minutes a source of confusion, and once she is allowed to begin playing the first tape, the sound quality is so poor that Witness C-061 complains about the "interference in the headphones." I glance at Milosevic, who seems thoroughly pleased by her discomfort.

The short excerpt that is played proves to be fairly dull; it sounds like any conversation between two political leaders who, wary of being overheard, have learned to express their thoughts in a language that is on its face pointedly unobjectionable.

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC: Factually speaking, Yugoslavia is defending its territories, and it's a matter of viewpoint—how you look at it.

RADOVAN KARADZIC: Well, we have to protect our people, the people living on those territories. We don't want anything that doesn't belong to us—that's the main thing.

SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC: Yes. If they got bogged down, down there, we have our ways.... Although these people said about the Sava Center tomorrow, that they will not attack them. But if it is really necessary, then they can be attacked as well.

Uertz-Retzlaff does try to elicit from C-061 some sense of what is "really" being discussed in this and a few of the other intercepted conversations she uses him to "introduce." But mainly C-061 sticks to dryly literal explication, such as when he thinks the conversation must have taken place and the location of references like "the Sava Center." After a few transcript excerpts are read into the record by Uertz-Retzlaff, most of the remainder of the morning is held in closed session. I watch Milosevic rise to his feet and launch into a tirade. Judge Robinson, who generally speaks little and asks questions comparatively infrequently, also becomes animated. I wonder what might be going on. When finally the court returns to open session, it is only to adjourn for the day. The morning leaves me pondering the irony that I am far less able to follow what is going on, or understand its significance, in person than from afar.

For an outsider on a visit to an institution like the Tribunal, the distinction between legitimate security and secrecy can sometimes feel fairly academic. All telephone numbers within the Tribunal are unlisted, all offices and even the Tribunal's library and cafeteria are forbidden to persons not part of the Tribunal staff, and even if you have an appointment to see someone who works here, you will be escorted both to and from your destination only after you've surrendered your passport to the guards at the reception desk. Also, since court proceedings take place in rooms sealed from their gallery, and many senior staff members arrive and leave by car (entering the building from an underground parking lot), you don't bump into the Tribunal's personnel very often. You do, however, especially if you are a smoker, find yourself in the company of a reasonably broad cross section of defense attorneys from the former Yugoslavia who like to take their breaks outside the Tribunal's entrance, where cigarette smoking is permitted.

On one such break, I find myself in conversation with a gray-haired Croatian lawyer who tells me he's tried several cases before the Tribunal over the years. I ask him what he thinks of Judge May. He tells me May presided on a panel that convicted and sentenced one of his clients to fifteen years. But then, beaming approval, he praises May's skill at dispatching motions rapidly on the basis of oral courtroom submissions (much as he had seen May do during the morning session) rather than dragging out matters with endless rounds of briefs. Another lawyer tells me he strongly prefers dealing with the judges from continental Europe, such as Judge Schomburg (from Germany). "I understand how he thinks," he says. "His every move." And a third regales me with the story of a client who wanted him to do everything possible to slow down proceedings once it became clear that the client was to have charges against him dropped. His client, he says, hoped to remain in detention, because "it was winter, and there was no heat or electricity in his village. And with no possibility of work, he was sure he'd starve if he had to return home."

I encountered perhaps a dozen or so defense lawyers who have practiced regularly before the Tribunal, of whom the majority were from either the former Yugoslavia or the United States. Many of the Americans professed, with a measure of disingenuity connoting criticism, to be somewhat bewildered by how continental judges "thought." But they also seemed to be somewhat bewildered by a number of the beliefs generally held by their co-counsel. One told me that when he first proposed making a motion for a mistrial (a very common tactic in U.S. criminal practice and a necessary antecedent to preserving issues for appeal), his Yugoslav colleague had opposed the idea as being "impolite" to the Tribunal. The American lawyer had found this thoroughly amusing, but to me it indicated something of the gulf between legal cultures with very different ideas about what courts do and what role lawyers play. To the Americans, generally, their primary duty was to win their case, and aggressively exploit



UNIDENTIFIED VICTIMS OF THE 1995 SREBRENICA MASSACRE FOUND IN MASS GRAVES ARE STORED IN A MORGUE IN TUZLA, BOSNIA

and all shortcomings that might emerge in the
ırse of trial, by either the OTP or the bench,
s their duty. The idea of being part of a coop-
tive effort to search for "the truth" was not just
eign to them but seemed to be viewed as a
hint mask for simple incompetence.
n the end, a number of current and former
secutors, Registry staff, and judges discussed
ir work and the Tribunal with me, but many of
se discussions were on a "background only"
is, and I agreed that anything I wanted to quote
uld have to be approved later. Again, this re-
ts legitimate concerns. The process of judicial
iberation is regarded almost universally as some-
ng best conducted behind closed doors. And as-
ts of criminal investigations still in process, if
closed, can either tip off wanted criminals still
at large or put potential witnesses in
mortal danger.

Several of my days at The Hague were spent
tching proceedings in the Tribunal's two oth-
courtrooms. One morning I watched the pro-
dings in Courtroom Two. In contrast to Court-
room One, where the Milosevic trial takes place most mornings, it is small, with a gallery that has a maximum capacity of two or three spectators, and it is squirreled away in a remote part of the Aegon building where a visitor must be escorted personally by a guard. One of the ex-Yugoslav defense attorneys I had met claimed that "Courtroom Two is where they put the cases they want to hide." So it seemed an excellent reason to spend a morning watching *Prosecutor* v. *Stakic*, a case brought against the wartime Serb mayor of a small town in the same district that had been involved in the Tribunal's first case, *Tadic*.[23] The defense was premised primarily on the idea that Stakic had been a political moderate kept largely out of the loop on what was going on in the local prison camps, and was, moreover, powerless to intervene in any matter that was purely under military and police authority. In the witness box was a young Serb, from another town, who offered a grim account of his lengthy detention under Croatian military authority and his year of forced labor. According to the prevailing view of the Tribunal, the testimony was completely irrele-

**The duty of the OTP to pro-
e defendants with exculpato-
material that comes into its
session does not end with a
l and conviction but contin-
indefinitely (or, presumably,
as long as the Tribunal contin-
ues to exist). It is now clear
that this duty will occasion a
number of significant questions,
many of which arise from the
long-standing and ongoing re-
fusal of Serbia and Croatia to
open their respective govern-
ment archives to Tribunal pros-
ecutors. Both governments
have, instead, selectively com-
plied with requests for docu-
mentary evidence on a case-by-
case basis; consequently, mate-
rials produced may be highly
relevant not only for a current
case but to another case long
since decided.**

tograph © Damir Sagolj/Reuters 1997

vant to the issue of Stakic's own guilt or innocence, but the Chambers' presiding judge, Schomburg, seemed to be affording Stakic's counsel a degree of leniency, since this was one of the defense's first witnesses.

It would have been easy to imagine another judge simply sending the witness home, or strictly confining the subject matter to his personal knowledge of the defendant. Schomburg was at pains not to do this. Instead, he listened attentively to the witness's story, told him he had made very serious allegations, and asked him whether any arrests had been made or prosecutions initiated against those the witness had spoken of. None had. Schomburg then assured him that his accusations would be looked into: "That's the fundamental reason why the international community decided to set up this Tribunal, especially to avoid impunity, impunity of peoples of whatsoever ethnicity or religion or from whatever military group. And in order to avoid impunity, it's necessary to have witnesses, and therefore we are extremely grateful for your testimony."

Schomburg then asked the witness if he would allow his testimony to be used in other proceedings, and the witness agreed he would. Before the witness was excused, Schomburg added, "I have to thank you for coming, for giving testimony, and hopefully by doing so, participating in the building up of a better future in your home country. Thank you. Have a safe trip home."

Schomburg's words did not ring with eloquence, but in person they had seemed heartfelt, and the sincerity of the judge's commitment to high purpose had been rather moving. If there is a distinction to be made between "victors' justice" and what IHL tribunals aspire to be, it is in such moments that it must be gleaned.

For most people, a law is not a law if there is no apparatus for punishing those who break it. In both theory and practice, crimes committed by soldiers—including the crimes we casually call "war crimes"—are frequently subject to investigation, trial, and punishment, and oft culminate in a court-martial, a trial within t regular court system of a defendant's countr or trial in the country where crimes ha taken place. At present, institutions that c effectively deal, in their totality, with larg scale humanitarian disaster—where civili tion seems to break down for an entire regi and life reverts to what Thomas Hobbes on termed "a state of nature"—are in their infa cy. The history of conflict since the Seco World War makes it plain that such disast occur with shocking frequency, and that lea ers, even our own, have sometimes seen pol ical necessity and justification in setting su events in motion on foreign soil.

There remains much about the future ope tion of some of the new jurisdictional conce of IHL that will require considerable furth development. For instance, were universal jur diction to gain only sporadic acceptance, t likely spectacle of a fairly random assortment retired octogenarians, ambushed on holidays when changing planes—hauled into cou lacking some common standard or real IH expertise, by prosecutors without a comprehe sive strategy, and charged with crimes that to place decades earlier in places remote to t forum—would do little to advance the claim justice. Nonetheless, tribunals such as t ICTY and the new International Crimi Court not only provide the world an opportu ty to give some meaning and effect to m than a century of well-intentioned treaties a "customary" international criminal law but w foster the growth of a group of highly skil and idealistic legal professionals—includ investigators, lawyers, and judges—who c begin to make some coherent legal sense of t worst humanitarian disasters and help cre incentives to prevent them.

Whether the threat of trial and punishm will do much to influence the conduct of fut Hitlers, Stalins, Pol Pots, Saddams, and Mi sevics is hard to know, but specialized foru adequately staffed and charged with enforc International Humanitarian Law are likely have a profound effect on the world's la abiding nations. They may even begin to a the calculus of leaders who aim to pur amoral goals within the letter of the law. I s pect that if such tribunals can be made to wo and succeed in earning world respect, th might help determine when peace enforcem is necessary and decisive collective internati al community action is imperative. Perhaps future, when policymakers begin to see a dist tragedy unfolding, the argument that they m take action because it is their *legal* duty to d will start to sound like a winning one.

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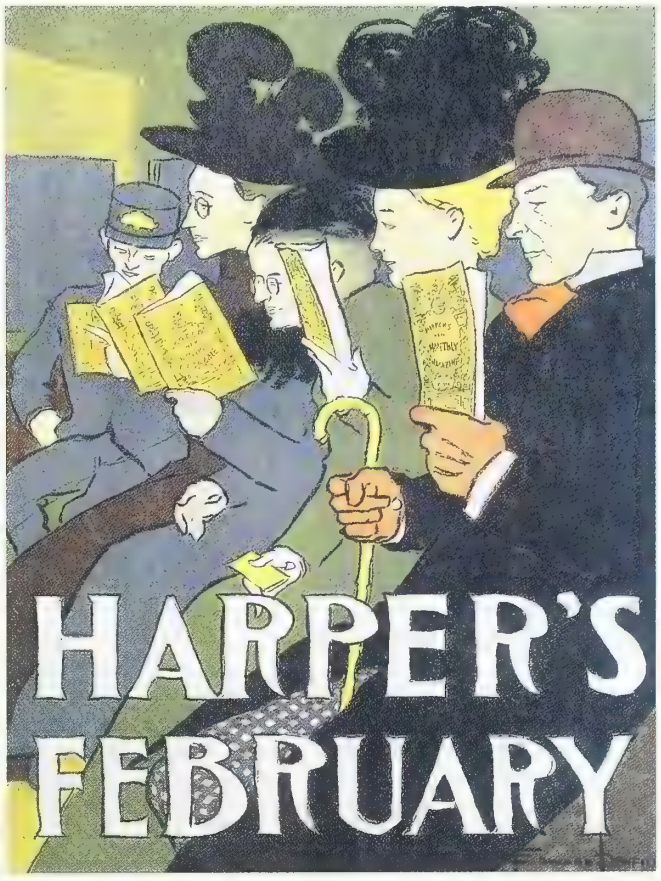
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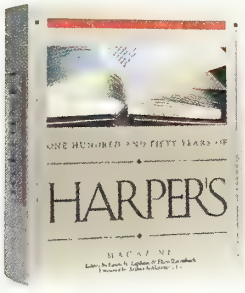
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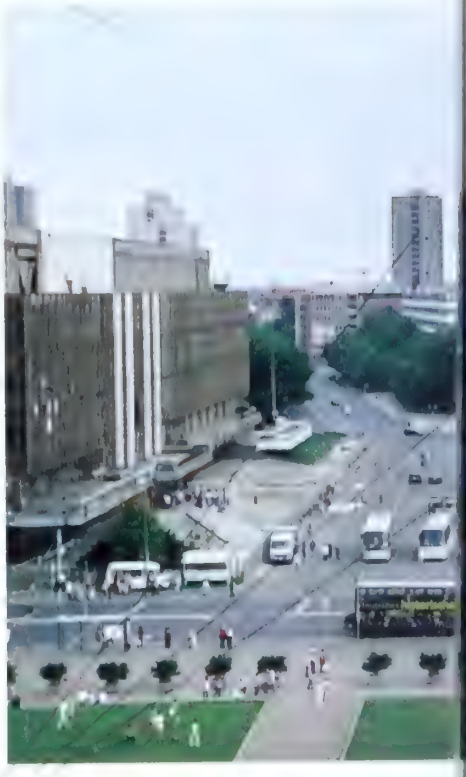
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# MACHE

## The re-rebranding

The Palace of the Republic on the center of Berlin. In the former capital of the German Democratic Republic, there are dozens of "schlossplatz" each occupied by a *Palast der Republik* that soon met the fate of the former royal *Schloss*. Not the local prince. In Berlin, however, a schlossplatz is where the space left behind by the imperial home of the Hohenzollern, dynamited and cleared away by the East German government in 1950—the space that, per a 1993 Bundestag resolution, will be filled with a replica of the old Schloss and the totem disappears. That is *Platz* not in the sense of "place," but in the sense of vacated position, as in *Machen Sie Platz*—"make room," "get out of the way." In fact, the effort to "rebuild" the Schloss became more militant to the effort to destroy it. It will be not so much a restoration of the past as a potentially lucrative remodeling of it, in line with the fashions of the day.



In 1976, when the Palast room-stone Schloss was demolished and declared the world's first German state had already become to communist elites what the Roman Republic was to the Caesars: a useful fiction to cloak the naked reality of power. Eventually, in the 1970s, the government filled part of the cleared ensemble with the Palace of the Republic—a credit-mall hotel complete with shops, restaurants, a bowling alley, and a video arcade. The Palace was an act of erasure and conversion—symbolic in both cases, of the former seat of monarchy, the worker-confidence people's state. (Harry Belafonte concert, Erich Honecker speech.) Beyond the immediate context of power: When neoclassical East Germans had protested the Schloss's demolition, the government had recorded their concern, but decided not to rebuild the entire palace. The mayor of East Berlin announced that "expert opinion has determined" that the Schloss had been irredeemably destroyed by Allied bombing, despite appearances to the contrary. "If the Schloss were still made of stone," he said, "no one would have seriously considered tearing it down."

Today, Berlin is $61 billion in debt, and its unemployment rate is nearly 20 percent. Vacant modernist blocks—such as the enormous structure on the Palace site that declared the reunification's intent to redevelop quickly, and they were torn down whenever possible to the city's hopeful *Stadtmarketing* brochures aimed at investors and investor-spectacles of restored prewar buildings and the place's architecture of the market, poetically of the nineteenth century. Even Hohenzollern. To the "Ostalgie" East Germans who remember the Palace's pleasures fondly, the politicians have advanced a new, commonly unavailable practical treatment in the service of reunification. Wolfgang Schäuble, then minister of the interior and chief architect of the new Schloss, declared that at the Palace "weren't so lovely and full of charm as it could have been. That's [I'm concerned." Now the decision must be reversed, a final bid and the Palace can be torn down, but it remains, of course, contaminated.

# PLATZ

*Annie Bourneuf*

For all its ideological bluster, the Communist government did not present itself as entirely ahistorical, as a revolutionary blank slate. It manufactured its own claim to Germanness by cobbling together bits of pre-1933 history that it felt it could use. Even as it destroyed the old Schloss, it kept this section, which includes the balcony Karl Liebknecht stood on when he proclaimed the German socialist republic in 1918, and lodged it into the center of the State Council building. Even the futuristic Palace was designed to mirror the old Schloss in its interior layout, and photographs of the castle's facade ornamented the Palace's beer bar. For the East German government, which justified its existence in large part on the claim that West Germany was not "antifascist" enough, such homages implied that East Germany was in fact the true heir to the Second Reich, not as a continuation or a negation but as a sort of dialectical synthesis.



These panels, installed by supporters of the new Schloss, are covered with photographs of the castle from before the kaiser's abdication. Since reunification, the official template for the city's remodeling has been the Berlin of the Second Reich, images of which are everywhere: on posters and postcards, in subways, in picture books available at newsstands and railway stations. One mayor during the 1990s presented his entire plan for the economic and cultural revitalization of the city as returning to it "the character and charm of . . . old black-and-white photographs." Rebuilding the Schloss—a project expected to cost nearly $800 million—will advance precisely this rebranding, an Epcot-style appropriation of the nationalist Second Reich in the service of *Stadtmarketing*. Far from attempting to situate itself within German history, a rebuilt Schloss will destroy its own context.

Behind these trees, excavated foundations of the Schloss are already visible. Although the date of the resurrection is still unspecified, the Bundestag voted in November to destroy the Palace without delay, no doubt because its divisiveness—as an eyesore for West Germans, a shrine for East Germans—shows just how incomplete reunification remains. The great publicity coup for the rebuilt Schloss came in 1993, when its advocates covered the *Platz* with a life-sized model, made of painted cloth hung over a scaffold. It looked as if the city of the photographs had magically returned. Here was an unbroken historical surface, a smooth gliding progression from the Second Reich to the present. The new Schloss itself will be of little more substance. In lending Berlin the pleasant "historicalness" the tourism industry demands, the castle will irrevocably remodel (*sanieren*, which also means "to sanitize" and "to restore to profitability") the site's actual history. As such, a rebuilt Schloss will serve as a fitting monument not to the Hohenzollern but to the ruling ideology of today.

*rneuf is an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at Jniversity.*

y Jan-Peter Bonino

# MINE OF STONES

## With and without the spirits along the Cordon de l'Ouest

*By Madison Smartt Bell*

Sousonné (as I will call him) had slowly been planting trees on his flat patch of land at Morne Rouge since he acquired it from the previous owner, who'd stripped this acre of all but one of its trees for charcoal, then turned it into a manioc field. The place was set high enough in the hills to be cool, if one could find a little shade, and almost always there was some movement of the air.

Last summer we sat together at an outdoor table under the sole surviving mango tree, drinking bottles of beer that I had imported from a gas station on La Route Nationale 1, Haiti's most passable thoroughfare, itself about a mile down a road that more resembled a ravine but that could be traversed with a four-wheel-drive vehicle and sufficient will to arrive. Sousonné was a carpenter, woodworker, and maker of drums; he'd retreated here from the nearby coastal town of Cap-Haïtien when the tourist trade there dried up in the late nineties. From where we sat we could see the young trees—bananas, coconut palms, *bwa blan*, pineapple, sweet orange—he'd arranged, along with cotton, aloe, and hibiscus, around the one-room wattle-and-daub house that served him as a workshop. With water, what was left of the land remained astonishingly fertile, and although it was now the dry season (indeed, in Haiti nowadays, thanks to deforestation and the attendant climate change, it is almost always the dry season), Sousonné had kept the trees alive by hauling water from a nearby spring. In ten years' time there'd be an acre of paradise here, if he could manage to keep it going. If every landowner in the country could plant and nourish as many trees, a decade would realize the dream of a flowering, flourishing Haiti: *Haiti Fleuri*.

In place of the two-story concrete walls that his neighbors lower on the road had erected to assure the privacy of the small feudal states within, Sousonné had only a slatted wooden gate and a fence variously composed of cactus, barbed wire, bamboo, and a few cunning arrangements of thorny dry brush that seemed to have fallen by accident where they lay but were in fact impossible to penetrate. The fence was just good enough to keep people and animals from wandering into the compound, but it did nothing to interrupt the view. Above us, the nearest peaks of Morne du Cap were mostly bare; a thin verdure covered the earth that still clung to the rock, but trees were few, and in many places the rock was exposed, quarried into open mouths from which erosion gullies drooled. A hu truck lumbered down the road, ha ing rock to the plain for constr tion. When it had passed, all quiet except for the occasional cl of picks on the ledges above, wh men exploited individual claims the mine of stones. Behind us, sun was sinking through a Tiep sky toward the great *mapou* of Kayman, where in 1791 the cere ny that started the first explosio the Haitian Revolution had b held. Although wounded by drought and under persistent att from the Protestants, the enorm ancient tree hung on.

In Vodou, the *mapou* is a sac tree, understood to be attractive spirits. Sousonné had planted a c ple of *mapou* saplings in his c pound, and now their yellow-gr spade-shaped leaves turned in wind, and all the garden seeme take a great inhalation. I let m go out into the movement of leaves and felt something like building of a trance. Informed Worlders would have recogniz as the first phase of hypnosis, wh as Haitians might see in it the ness of a spirit. I had come, a time ago, to prefer the Haitian sion. In the First World, I was s with the resources of my own che; in Haiti, a spirit might vol teer to walk with me as a guide.

For fifteen years I had been ing a series of novels about T

*Madison Smartt Bell has written fourteen books, including* All Souls' Rising *and* Master of the Crossroads, *the first and second installments in a trilogy about the revolution in Haiti. The third volume will appear later this year.*

it Louverture, the first national
ler of the Haitian Revolution,
ch began with the overthrow of
very in 1791. A Vodouisant
ld say that Toussaint's spirit was
e near, invisibly present, breath-
in the wind that moved the
es of Sousonné's young trees,
aled from the pool of souls of the
umerable Haitian dead, that
it reservoir of spirit energy: *Les*
*rts et les Mystères*. Here in the
th of Haiti, time seemed to col-
se; the two hundred years that
passed since the death of Tous-
it were summoned into the pres-
by the spiraling leaves. It was
ninth year in which I had trav-
d to Haiti, and each time, it
ned, the effect grew stronger.
or years I had been trying to
plete a transit of the old Cordon




l'Ouest, across the mountain
ge that divides the north of Haiti,
ere Sousonné had planted his
es, from Port-au-Prince and the
t of the country. During the revo-
ion, a string of posts along that
ge had been the root of Tous-
nt's power, allowing him to make
isolated fortress of Cap-Haïtien
l the entire northern region, from
t Liberté to Môle Saint Nicolas.
poleon's best soldiers had broken
mselves on those rocks. Two hundred years later the terrain remained forbidding. From the interior, I had covered the range as far as the town of Dondon, and from the coast as far as Marmelade, but thus far the passage between those towns had been impassable to me. I dreamed of the rain forests that had been there in Toussaint's time, and I wanted very much to see what might be up there now.

I always wanted to do this or that when I came to Haiti, but I had learned that completely different things might ensue; it was necessary to accept those transformations, for a too stubborn insistence on one's own program—*têt bèf*, as Haitian Kreyol succinctly has it, "bull head"—can be almost suicidal here. Better to yield up my own will and let the spirits lead. That was the main thing Haiti had taught me, and it was also a point that most of American officialdom seemed to miss.

In Haitian Vodou, it is said that most priests of the religion "work with both hands." The right hand is for grace and healing and harmony, for giving rather than seizing; work of the right hand is done less by the individual will of the operator than by the spirit that spontaneously moves him. The left hand is sinister and operates for power and money and gain, using the forces of spirits trapped in objects, enslaved to do magical work for their purchasers. One can guess which gets employed more often, and at a higher price. This pattern repeats itself across the whole course of American involvement here.

Haiti has neither oil nor anything else of glaringly obvious economic or strategic interest to the United States, so when the Clinton Administration sent the U.S. military to restore the elected government in 1994, it looked like a purely idealistic democratization project. But anyone who took a longer, closer look would be likely to notice that the idealistic right hand of American influence was being countered by less visible movements of the far less well-intentioned left hand. In the last decade of the twentieth century, Haiti might have done a better job of harvesting the flowers of democracy without our interference or help.

The legitimate president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was a Salesian priest and liberation theologian who came to political prominence in the late eighties, mainly through a series of broadcasts on Radio Soleil whose populist rhetoric irritated the increasingly shaky government. Those were years of unusual instability in Haiti, following the collapse of the dictatorship begun when "Papa Doc" Duvalier took the presidency in 1957 and ended when his son, Jean-Claude, abdicated in 1986. In the ensuing confusion, the Haitian hard right kept asserting its authority via a rapidly shifting series of juntas, and political violence escalated with events like the massacre of landless peasants near Jean Rabel on the Northwest Peninsula in 1987, the slaughter of voters in a Port-au-Prince polling station later the same year, and in 1988 an attempt to assassinate Aristide himself as he celebrated mass in the church of Saint Jean Bosco in the capital.

tration by Mike Reagan

The Saint Jean Bosco massacre was actually the third attempt on Aristide's life, and his escape looked almost miraculous; indeed, these brushes with martyrdom gave the young priest a mystical aura in the eyes of the Haitian people. He won widespread grass-roots support through a network of small churches called Ti Legliz. In 1990, late in the campaign, he yielded to popular pressure and became a candidate for president. The rallying cry, *Nou se Lavalas* ("We are the Flood"), made Lavalas the name of the movement that swept Aristide into the presidential palace.

In the United States, the Bush I regime took a dim view of these developments. Liberation theology requires its subscribers to work for the betterment, even the empowerment, of the poor. Inspected through the lens of the lingering Cold War mentality of the American right, Lavalas populism looked a lot like socialism—and in a country check by jowl with Cuba. From the start, Aristide's program was to move the mass of the Haitian people from misery to a dignified poverty, and to do so in a manner promoting national self-sufficiency—a goal incongruent with the practical implementation of Bush's "New World Order." Bush Administration officials in Haiti conducted polls to convince themselves that Aristide could not win the presidency, and were appalled when in fact he did. Most Haitians believed that the American officials there, if they had not actually instigated the coup that catapulted Aristide into exile in 1991, had known it was coming and done nothing to stop it.

Even as the Clinton Administration embargoed Haiti and fulminated about the *defaktos*, as the military junta was most often called, the CIA was sending payments to one of its collaborators: Emmanuel "Toto" Constant. During the *defakto* period, Constant was chief of the "Front for the Advancement and Progress of Haiti" (FRAPH), a paramilitary adjunct of the Haitian army responsible for the main menu of terroristic atrocities, including the massacre of Aristide supporters in the Raboteau area of the coastal town of Gonaives in 1994. Although Constant has been convicted in absentia of complicity in the Raboteau killings, and is entitled to a new trial if he should be returned to Haiti, he lives peacefully in Brooklyn nowadays, apparently immune to extradition.

When U.S. forces headed for Haiti in September 1994, Jimmy Carter was in Port-au-Prince, working for a peaceful resolution up to the eleventh hour and fifty-ninth minute; the story was that the *defaktos* did not start cooperating with Carter until one of them was notified by a call from Washington that the American planes had taken off. The result, vastly confusing to our boys in the military as well as to the Haitian people who had lived under systematic state terror since Aristide went into exile, was that the "invasion" morphed into an "intervention" while the planes were still in the air. Journalists on the Haiti beat invented the hybrid "intervasion" to denote it. Originally advised that FRAPH was the enemy, the soldiers were told as they deployed across Haiti that FRAPH should now be treated as a loyal opposition party. Toto Constant made a fleeting public appearance to that end (in the company of a spokesman for the American embassy), though soon afterward he departed for the United States. This transformation permitted most of the death-squad members to vanish somewhere up-country, weapons in hand.

Ground travel in Haiti is hindered by the catastrophic disrepair of the road system—on a bad day it can take up to eight hours to drive the hundred-odd miles from Port-au Prince to Cap-Haïtien—and by a perennial state of life-threatening hazard, which makes a lot of people afraid to drive. Banditry, reduced to a nocturnal activity when the U.S. military arrived in Haiti in 1994, had leaked back into the daylight hours by 2000; for remnants of the *defakto* period paramilitary and for the masses of soldiers dismissed when Aristide abolished the Haitian army soon after his return, the gun had turned into the meal ticket. Politically motivated roadblocks we another impediment; in turbule times, demonstrators might raise ba ricades from chunks of old mason and derelict car parts and, invar ably, burning tires to shut down tr fic within and between the princip towns and freeze anyone's effort accomplish anything. For these re sons, after my first few visits, I bega riding a small plane from Fort Lau erdale directly to Cap-Haïtie avoiding the road back and fort from the capital.

The presidential election sche uled for the fall of 2000 was prece ed by parliamentary elections th took place in May. As a rule, I pr fer to arrive in Haiti just after ele tions, when tension and turbulen usually give way to calm, so th spring I took the direct flight Cap-Haïtien, and for double insu ance I booked my return for a Su day; road-blocking demonstratio seldom occur on the weekends Haiti, when there is little traffic interrupt. The day before I w scheduled to depart, however, I w driving into Cap from Bréda Plan tion, on the plain outside the c gate, and found La Route Nation 1 closed by burning tires and bar cades. Since there was a $2,000 d ductible on my car-rental insurar specifically in case of "*mouveme de foule*," I pulled the 4 x 4 int bootleg turn and went off-road, c ting across a wedge of the plain the only other road into town, Route Nationale 3. The tires w already burning high when reached the point of entry into slum of La Fossette, but the dem strators had not yet dragged the b ricade across the intersection, s hit the gas and ran it. Ten minu later I was safely back in the q colonial part of town where I stay though, less fortunately, on wrong side of the barricades fr the airport whence I was suppo to depart the next morning.

As luck would have it, all the er occupants of my small hotel w Organization of American St election observers, who had com from their posts around the nort Haiti for R&R. Before, they hac ways kept to themselves, but n

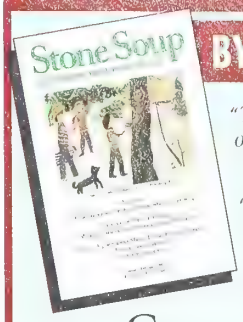
y were interested in talking to since I had actually seen what happening. For their part, they e suddenly willing to tell me . During a night of slightly anx- drinking, the head of their team ched the math for me on a paper kin. In several multi-candidate ctions the candidates of Fanmi alas, Aristide's party, had come ugh with a plurality of between and 50 percent, while the other didates, six or seven of them, it the difference more or less nly. The trouble was that the tian constitution required a ma- ty, not a plurality, to decide a ner. To save the bother of a off, the supervisors had simply pped the bottom four candidates n all these elections and recalcu- d the remainder as if it were 100 cent of the vote. Then the whis- began to blow.

The people now blockading Cap- tien were involved in an ostensi- popular outcry demanding that election results be affirmed in fa- of the Fanmi Lavalas candidates hout delay or equivocation. But OAS people I was talking to be- ved that the whole thing had n instigated by a relatively small, fessionally organized group who l done the same thing around t-au-Prince a few days before. d they were serious. During the ht we could see flames shooting o the sky along the road from La sette to the airport gate. More- er, the OAS team learned ough their satellite phones that demonstrators had welded the dge shut at Limbé on the coast l felled trees across the crossroads Dondon in the mountains—thus ling off the whole north of Haiti m the rest of the country, just e Toussaint used to do.

n the event, I made my way to e airport by departing at dawn, posing correctly that the people nning the barricades would be ttentive at that hour. But the ercussions of the jiggered elec- n went on and on. Why had the valas people done it? It seemed ar enough that their candidates uld have won the runoff elec- ns the constitution required, and



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NOTES FOR "DIAMETRICODE":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov.*

*Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 8. rev.; 10. homonym; 12. a-mi(go)s[s]; 14. G.I.-G's; 15. g.-lit-Z(infandel); 16. 'S-cot; 17. qua-hog; 18. ovo, initials; 19. out-d-I.D.; 20. phoen*-IX; 22. (l)argely*; 25. Kim-on-o; 27. Marian*; 29. z-ephyr*; 30. iceman*; 35. SE-re-NE; 39. use-less, two mngs.; 41. fettle, fete'll; 42. rev.; 43. hidden; 44. r(outine)-are; 45. a-tsar, rev.; 46. hidden in reverse; 47. *; 48. (w)hat('s); 49. men-sch.

DOWN: 1. J(agua)r.; 2. *; 3. wag(G-L)e; 4. ca-V-in-U, rev.; 5. b-a.(zoo)k.a.; 6. V-I-S-I-M, I position; 9. goes*; 10. (C)oh(10)an; 11. (Am)using, 13. m'I(rev.) FT 21. two mngs.; 23. EEG, rev.; 24. homophone; 26. O-we; 28. (c)enter-ER; 29. [illegible] 33. homophone; 33. tat-a-l., 34. two mngs., 35. s-(team)-y; 36. hidden; 37. *; 38. (ge)Yser; 40. jest, pun.

by manipulating the results they had put a powerful tool into the hands of their indefatigable enemies, who now could claim that Aristide and Lavalas were out to establish a one-party, winner-take-all system, tantamount to a dictatorship and likely to evolve into one. The rejoinder from Lavalas sympathizers was that Aristide absolutely needed an overwhelming majority in parliament to break the deadlock that had paralyzed almost all legislation since 1995, that the outcome of the questioned elections was obvious anyway (in fact, neither side much disputed this point), and that Lavalas had grown wary of foreign advisers (by which they meant us) re-running elections over and over on whatever pretext until they got a result they liked.

Regardless of motive, the cost was high. Whatever international aid had been seeping through was now completely shut off, pending resolution of the disputed elections. Even strictly humanitarian aid was blocked, and as Paul Farmer, the doctor renowned for his human-rights activism, pointed out in the press and in email and to anyone who might listen, the result was a brutal punishment of the poorest of the poor, now denied funds that might have provided them with basic health care and water-purification systems. Still worse, anti-Aristide propagandists managed to spread the taint of the May elections to the presidential election in November—though in fact there were no such irregularities in the November elections. The opposition, now somewhat queasily clustered under the umbrella of Convergence Démocratique, proclaimed its own president, Gerard Gourgues, who despite his credibility as a human-rights activist made a call for the restoration of the Haitian army on the day of Aristide's inauguration. No one seemed to take the Convergence shadow government too seriously, but there was a plausible coup attempt by a small commando force that attacked the Presidential Palace on the night of December 17, 2000. Aristide's detractors claimed that the coup was a hoax perpetrated by Fanmi Lavalas itself, in order to justify retaliation against the opposition. Although there were violent, ostensibly popular counterdemonstrations following the foiled coup (Convergence headquarters were burned), that conspiracy theory seemed about as likely as the one holding that the Bush Administration was responsible for the events of September 11. Certainly the Bush Administration had gotten more headway for its initiatives out of that catastrophe than Aristide ever got out of the coup attempt.

I went to Haiti for the first time in the summer of 1995, soon after the American "intervasion" and Aristide's return to the Presidential Palace. It was popular at that time to refer to Aristide's arrival in power as "The Second Revolution," fulfilling the forestalled promise of the first. In an oral-history culture like Haiti's, the most distant events seem to have taken place in the time of one's grandparents, and the spirit of Toussaint Louverture appeared to be present like a wise elder at Aristide's shoulder—there to complete the mission of liberation that had been frustrated back in 1802, when Toussaint was betrayed by Napoleon's generals and deported to die in a prison in France.

But Haiti's problems with the outside world had their origins in the revolution that Toussaint had helped to begin. When Haiti declared independence from France in 1804, it instantly became a pariah state. The United States and the surviving colonial powers were still running slave systems all over the Western Hemisphere, so the Haitian example was anathema to them. For the next hundred years, the country was drastically unstable, its government changing hands by violence more often than not. Most of the population had reverted to African village ways, living without much need for government services and comfortably out of the government's reach. The *lakou*, or extended family compound, was the basic social unit, within which members of the group cooperated to supply their material needs and to serve their ancestral spirits. The people[illegible] masse would emerge from th[illegible] *lakous* in the jungled hills to supp[illegible] or oppose the overthrow of the c[illegible] rent government, and then, o[illegible] the matter was settled, disapp[illegible] back into them.

In the early years of his rule, P[illegible] Doc Duvalier put an end to this r[illegible] tively cheerful anarchy by install[illegible] a system of state terror inspired[illegible] his admiring study of Adolf Hit[illegible] Having observed that changes[illegible] government in Haiti occurred m[illegible] often through military coup, Du[illegible] lier created a nationwide param[illegible] tary organization; modeled [illegible] Hitler's Brown Shirts, the "Tont[illegible] Macoutes," as the people soon ch[illegible] tened them, checked and balan[illegible] the army through a relationship[illegible] mutual paranoia. This strategy [illegible] so successful that President-for-l[illegible] Duvalier became the first Hait[illegible] head of state since the revolut[illegible] to die in office of natural cau[illegible] His heir, Jean-Claude, was no[illegible] fortunate, though he did manage[illegible] hang on to power for a couple[illegible] years longer than his father h[illegible] done. There followed a period[illegible] distinctly less cheerful and mu[illegible] bloodier anarchy, until the 19[illegible] election of Aristide.

In 1995 the wind of reform [illegible] everywhere; the regeneration [illegible] Haiti felt like a tremendous th[illegible] of which to be part. Like many [illegible] eign visitors there, I yielded to [illegible] country's dreamlike enchantme[illegible] Every year I returned once or tw[illegible] and in the midst of my revoluti[illegible] ary research I got involved in sc[illegible] small-scale reforestation proje[illegible] and efforts to revive tourism in [illegible] north. I helped a couple of Port-[illegible] Prince writers get their books p[illegible] lished in France and (pending [illegible] return of the tourists) bou[illegible] paintings from a Cap-Haïtï[illegible] artists' cooperative and tried[illegible] market them in the States. [illegible] *Haïti Fleuri* did not materialize.

The Haitian constitution un[illegible] which Aristide was first elected p[illegible] mits no president to succeed h[illegible] self—Haiti wants no more preside[illegible] for life. In 1994 he returned to of[illegible] with only a few months remain[illegible] on his term, most of which had b[illegible]

it in exile, though he had just ugh time to abolish the army with the help of U.S. and U.N. sers and trainers, establish the ian National Police as the first lian, human-rights-respecting enforcement body the country ever known. Then Réné Pré—a member of the Lavalas move- it so close to Aristide that graffiti nd Port-au-Prince at the time of lection read *Préval = Aristide pou s anko* ("Préval = Aristide for more years")—won the presi- cy in 1995 and found himself in essentially impossible situation. iament was deadlocked to the it that no legislation could be ed, while much of the aid money ded to build a working society contingent on the passage of s to implement then-fashionable and World Bank "structural ad- ment" policies. The paralyzed ernment and the blockage of the rnational-aid pipeline kept most he promised reforms from occur- . The lot of the average Haitian worse instead of better, as the lo- currency collapsed vis-à-vis the . dollar, in which imported food- fs were priced. The mood of the ulace, discouraged by the spiral- cost of living—*la vie chère*—grew easingly dark.

réval, originally trained as an nomist, had some notable suc- es with land reform, especially in still-fertile Artibonite region, but general feeling was that the coun- had gone into a holding pattern, iting Aristide's inevitable reelec- n to the presidency, which could lly take place in the year 2000. ause of the numinosity of the e, the prospect of his return got draped in millenarian ex- pectations, even by me.

hadn't passed through Port-au- nce since 1999, and before I head- up north, I wanted to find out how gs felt in the capital since Aris- e's reelection. A domestic flight to p-Haïtien would spare me the diffi- ties and dangers of the road when vas time to go north. My Port-au- nce base was the Hotel Oloffson, a bling, tropical gingerbread fanta- reputed to be the model for the gothic structures of Charles Adams's cartoons, and more certainly the original of the "Hotel Trianon" in Graham Greene's *The Comedians*.

In the old days, Greene is said to have done his Haitian reporting by sitting beside the Oloffson pool, and probably that could still be done, because everyone showed up here, and they all liked to talk. Word was that 2003 had been a bad year, a year of no evident progress. Insecurity and impunity were flourishing. The murder of Jean Dominique, the founder of Radio Haiti Inter, slain in the station compound in April 2000, remained unsolved, and some believed that the state was protecting the assassin. No one in the Haitian press had a higher stature—Dominique's long career of gadfly commentary had won him the name of the "conscience of Haitian journalism"—so his assassin's impunity seemed especially ominous for the freedom of speech so recently restored.

The international crew that hung around the Oloffson was glumly inclined to agree that the Haitian National Police was a good idea gone wrong for a number of reasons: the U.S. and U.N. support staff had been terminated too soon; the training period had been too brief and on-the-job experience was very thin; since the HNP was now the only legitimate armed force in the country, the behind-the-scenes struggle to control it was ferocious; the force was too easily infiltrated by former army men and death-squad members, and perhaps also by the American CIA. Worse, the HNP was outgunned from the start. In 1997, I could still have bought an assault rifle on the street for about $20 U.S., and in 2003, I sometimes wished I had done it, for the price had gone up to about $3,000. One of the rumors going around was that HNP officers were themselves importing weapons for resale, so as to supplement their often unpaid salaries. The rank and file of the army had been in the same shape; poorly paid and often obliged to furnish their own uniforms and equipment. Once the army was disbanded, the common soldiers began to starve, and those who did not sell their weapons early had little disincentive, in an economy featuring near-total unemployment even before they were dumped into it, to resort to entrepreneurial crime (hitherto almost unknown in Haiti) or to sell their services on an alarmingly open market. Under similar circumstances, the HNP was vulnerable to corruption. An honest officer had no hope of promotion in the system that obtained. I had been stopped on the road and meticulously searched on several occasions, and although the officers were civil and professional every time, I was always told afterward that if they had found the drugs they were looking for, they would have kept them to sell for themselves.

Street violence and intimidation had become endemic, perpetrated by gangs known under the general rubric of the Chimè, in support of Fanmi Lavalas, though not necessarily with Aristide's blessing. Even Aristide's detractors did not claim that he controlled the Chimè completely—or could—for although the Chimè served political purposes, they did not much resemble the organized paramilitary wings of the Duvalier or *defakto* regimes. Insubstantial as their name implied, the Chimè came and went as occasions demanded; they weren't any kind of a standing force.

The old and new dragons of the Haitian far right had not been idle; there was a lot of spooky activity on the Central Plateau involving old army types who were supposed to be training for another coup attempt in the mountains across the Dominican border. Persistent rumor had it that these efforts were sponsored and encouraged by the International Republican Institute, an organization affiliated with the U.S. Republican Party and commonly associated with Jesse Helms. The IRI acronym is, with a strange suitability, pronounced in Haiti to rhyme with "eerie." Perhaps those theories were paranoid, but a few weeks before I arrived, attackers dressed in army fatigues had sabotaged the renovation of the hydroelectric plant at Peligre Dam, just before it was supposed to have put thousands more kilowatts online to Port-au-Prince. Paul Farmer felt ripples of the assault at Zanmi Lasanté, the hospital he runs

[illegible] far from Peligre; five of his Haitian colleagues were held hostage for several hours by the saboteurs, who later made off with an ambulance, and one of the two Peligre security guards killed in the attack had been Farmer's patient. More recently still, saboteurs had demolished road-building equipment intended to restore the ruined road between Saint Marc and Gonaives: more than $500,000 of damage. Of course you could always find someone to tell you that the sabotage was really carried out by the party in power, to create an excuse for its failure to restore the country's infrastructure.

Tim Pershing, an occasional regular at the Hotel Oloffson, was not buying that story. Although he had also not signed on to the extreme opposite version, which held that U.S. right-wingers were out-and-out running a neo-contra operation in the hills on the frontier, he did suspect that they were doing a decent amount of winking and nudging. Destabilization efforts were easy, after all, especially in the provinces, where the police were spread extremely thin.

Pershing would not say whether he was really a relative of the famous general, though he did sport the same lush handlebar mustache. He was working the opposite side of the street from IRI, teaching a version of high-school civics to grass-roots organizations on the Lavalas end of the spectrum, on behalf of something called the National Democratic Institution, which was a reverse image of the IRI. Oddly, both organizations were being funded by the National Endowment for Democracy—itself a tentacle of USAID. That IRI and NDI persistently worked against each other only confused matters more, and not only for their Haitian advisees; Pershing told me that he found the exportation of American partisan politics to Haiti to be downright bizarre.

I was tempted to see IRI and NDI in Vodouisant terms: as the sinister left and beneficent right hand, respectively, of American foreign policy. From a Haitian perspective, it was hard not to notice that both hands extended from the same organism. Leslie Voltaire saw no difference between NDI and IRI; to him they were fingers of the very same hand, groping for Aristide's overthrow. I called on Voltaire, unannounced and unexpected, at the Ministry of Haitians Living Abroad, in downtown Port-au-Prince, not much thinking he'd receive me, but it happened that he had read and liked my Haitian novels, so maybe it was the spirit of Toussaint Louverture that got me in the door. Outside it was sweltering, the noon sun high, the street breathless with gasoline fumes fixed in the dense humidity. The two anterooms of Voltaire's ministry, where I briefly waited to be passed along to the next level, were each progressively more air-conditioned, and I think these pauses were for the benefit of one's health—so that the frostiness of the inner sanctum would not be too great a shock to the system.

Voltaire was a self-contained man, with a quiet catlike poise; his voice was light and his manner had the charged calm of someone who has recognized at some point in the past that raving and screaming are useless. A staunch Aristide loyalist who had shared the president's exile in Washington and played some role in the government ever since, he undoubtedly had also shared many of Aristide's frustrations, both in and out of the country. Now he ran the bureau that dealt with what is informally known as the Tenth Department: the millions of diaspora Haitians, most of whom live in Canada or the United States. That is a very significant group, if only because of their remittances; Voltaire estimated that $800 million came back to Haiti every year from the diaspora, while the annual value of exports was only $250 million. With the aid embargo almost total, the Tenth Department had become Haiti's most viable resource.

The problem, as it appeared to me, was that the diaspora money reinforced the feudal practices that had constituted Haiti's political system, *faute de mieux*, since independence in 1804: those who could pay built walled compounds, installed generators, and purchased 4 x [illegible] hicles that could navigate the r[illegible] or nonexistent roads, thus con[illegible] sating (at least for those within [illegible] walls) for the state's inability to [illegible] vide basic security and serv[illegible] (Richard Morse—host, propri[illegible] and resident rock star of the [illegible] Oloffson, who had been a La[illegible] hero during the *defakto* period [illegible] a jaundiced eye on the unres[illegible] yond the hotel's cinder-block [illegible] tier, muttering, "If you don't p[illegible] democratic means of opposi[illegible] then you should prepare for al[illegible] tive forms of opposition." I[illegible] months following the murder of [illegible] Dominique, his remarks had [illegible] more openly pointed, but [illegible] something seemed to have restr[illegible] him—perhaps the killings of [illegible] journalists—and his comment[illegible] grown more opaque. As ea[illegible] 1997, Morse had said that h[illegible] trying to build a separate state [illegible] the hotel compound. It was[illegible] everybody had to do, at some[illegible] to survive.)

Another vicissitude of the [illegible] economic crisis, Voltaire to[illegible] was brain drain; the intellectu[illegible] political classes were pouring [illegible] the country and, increasingly, [illegible] laborers were, too. This exodu[illegible] severe impediment to the de[illegible] ment of democracy on the An[illegible] plan; Haiti was capable of c[illegible] the kind of middle class [illegible] democracy's breeding ground[illegible] was not capable of keeping it[illegible] country. Meanwhile, tens o[illegible] sands of people were abandon[illegible] exhausted countryside to flo[illegible] city slums, where, since th[illegible] next to no legal work for h[illegible] many would drift into the [illegible] arms of the Chimè.

Entrepreneurial crimina[illegible] miliar and tolerated in n[illegible] cities of the United State[illegible] new and frightening thing [illegible] Many were feeling nostalgi[illegible] stability that Duvalier's tot[illegible] state had furnished, inclu[illegible] men I knew whose fathers [illegible] assassinated by the regime.[illegible] them, a Cap-Haïtien resta[illegible] had told me in tones of re[illegible] "Life was more sure for n[illegible] Duvalier"—the Duvaliers [illegible]

iti safe for tourists, if not for its
n people. In June 2002, when a
opean friend and I were strolling
ng the Cap-Haïtien waterfront by
ht, a burly Haitian man walking
ne sized us up and suddenly
uted, "Vive Duvalier!" It would
e been unthinkable even one
r before, but that night no one
ected, or even paid much atten-
n. Meanwhile, Jean-Claude Du-
ier was broke in France and look-
for work and explaining to
yone who would listen that
his only profession was
politics.

When Aristide was first elected,
alas really did sweep all before it,
l when he was restored in 1995,
re was more than enough eupho-
to go around. In 1996 and 1997, I
ought I understood what was going
—it had seemed easier then to
l a side and take it—but in 2003,
idn't even think I had a right to
opinion. There seemed to be no
id foundation on which an opin-
n could be based. The more I
ked to people in Port-au-Prince
e cloudier things got, until it
med that the most obvious fact
s always embraced by its dark,
ntradictory inversion. Up north,
the region of Cap-Haïtien, it was
other world, which often seemed
ne a simpler one.

Sometimes I spent a night in
usonné's compound near Bwa
yman. He gave me use of the little
ise: one bare room under the tin
f, a mat, a mosquito net, and a
idle. When I risked an excursion
doors at night, the stars above
re brightly fixed, the bamboo
ispered in the ravine, and I felt
t the new trees around the house
ye growing. In this atmosphere,
rain fundamentals recovered their
wh. Haiti still owned remarkably
rile soil and an amazingly vital
ure. If trees were watered, they
uld take hold, and if the trees
ge back, so would the rain. With
es to hold the land in place,
*ilas*—the seasonal floods—would
arish the earth instead of stripping
f the bare rock. If one had a clear
ntion and the patience to let it
lpen, beneficent spirits would surely come to inhabit Sousonné's young *mapous*, there where they quickened, silvered by the starlight. *Haïti Fleuri* was still possible.

Also, staying at Sousonné's place gave me a solid head start toward that hard-to-reach stretch of the Cordon de l'Ouest: the new road connecting Marmelade and Dondon. At dawn, he and I pushed my rented 4 x 4 to start it and began the passage across the plain toward La Route Nationale 3, which would take us up to Dondon. At the car rental I'd had the choice of a truck with good tires or one that you could start with the key, and the tires were plainly more important. In 1995, Route 3 had offered a passable stretch of pavement as far as Fort Liberté, but now, once past the airport, no vestige of that remained; instead we zigzagged over washboards and potholes so deep they would send our heads smacking against the roof of the cabin. At Dondon we forded the Bouyaha River, thanks to four-wheel drive, and found the new road that crossed the dizzying mountain peaks toward Marmelade.

In places numinous as this, Sousonné was wont to say that the air was full of spirits, and I did feel that I was inhaling something extraordinary as we climbed. We were running the backbone of Toussaint Louverture's ancient power. These mountains, heavily forested in the days of the revolution, had been ideal for guerrilla tactics, and so long as Toussaint controlled them he had access to a seaport at Gonaives and to the Spanish side of the island via the Central Plateau. He could also seal off the Northern Department from the rest of the country, a tactic still useful to some in the twenty-first century.

Toussaint did not live to see the result of his struggle: the emergence of Haiti as an independent black state, founded by slaves who had broken their own chains and driven off their masters. After his deportation to France, the torch he'd carried was passed to Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a man of more ferocious spirit, whose watchword was *Koupé tèt, boulé* [illegible] cut off heads and burn down




...es." Papa Doc Duvalier had systematically associated himself and his regime with the spirit of Dessalines, as he deployed Dessalinien tactics on his own people: ruthless application of overwhelming force. Aristide seemed more attracted to the spirit of Toussaint, who had a real distaste for useless bloodshed, political and diplomatic skills to match or surpass his remarkable military talent, a delicately evolved sense of Haiti's relationship with the surrounding colonial powers, a devout Catholicism able to coexist with the Vodou he also practiced, and a social vision, based on harmonious cooperation among the races, a good two hundred years ahead of his time. Perhaps it was those similarities that encouraged Haitians to regard Aristide's rise to power as a Second Revolution that would complete the process begun two centuries before and finally set them altogether free.

In Haiti the influence of a forebear can be more tangible than elsewhere; the spirits of Dessalines and Toussaint were part of the community of ancestral souls available to mount the heads of the living. It had long seemed plausible to me that the spirit of Toussaint Louverture walked with Aristide, at least for part of the road he had taken, but why then was there such frustration now? It was likely that Toussaint himself had served more than one spirit, for he had some extremely ruthless capacities alongside his more benevolent traits; among other things, the Haitian notion of leadership for life was first proposed in Toussaint's constitution of 1801. In the end, though, Toussaint was undone by foreign powers, and Aristide also had suffered plenty of vexation from outside interference; maybe he too was destined to be a "Precursor," Toussaint's title in the pantheon of Haitian heroes; it was Dessalines who got to be called "Liberator." Either way, Toussaint's spirit would somehow persist: a Haitian spirit may abandon one *serviteur* and move on to another, if it feels it has not been well served.

The road from Dondon to Marmelade was, as Sousonné had predicted, "a little rocky," or, to be more precise, it was a rock slide that required me to keep the truck in first-gear four-wheel drive for the whole transit, thanking the spirits for every micron of rubber on the tires. The engine had just barely enough juice to clear the steepest crests. But certainly it was better than no road at all. The surrounding vistas were silent and vast; although all the peaks and most of the valleys were heartbreakingly bare, these mountains beyond mountains retained an unearthly beauty. I had flown over other ranges on the plane from Port-au-Prince and seen how the shallows of the bay south of Cap-Haïtien were brown with earth eroded from the wasted hills. Here, deeper into the interior, it really was no better; there were no trees left to burn for charcoal, and the people had abandoned a landscape that could no longer nurture them. There was next to no sign of human habitation, though we did pass a couple of gangs of men with hoes.

The environmental crisis in Haiti was at the bottom of everything else; if it was not reversed extremely soon, these mountains would be desert, and the rest of the country would feel the shock. On the Northwest Peninsula, according to reports, it had already happened; there the people had already eaten all their dogs. A rumor ran around the Oloffson of an American plan to evacuate the Northwest Peninsula entirely and ship the remaining inhabitants down to the cities, a scheme that would have the merit of providing the U.S. military with a clear field of fire from Môle Saint Nicolas, whose deep-water harbor controlled the Windward Passage between Haiti and the eastern tip of Cuba, all the way to Port de Paix.

We struggled on through the vacant landscape, now and then slipping on the shoals of loose rock. Apart from the engine and the sound of the wheels, we moved through a whistling high-altitude quiet, until on the outskirts of Marmelade the bustle of human life recommenced. Cautiously I nosed the truck through a street ma... until we reached the central squa... where Toussaint had bid farewell ... his troops two hundred years befo... I had arranged this point as a mee... ing place with a friend from Port-a... Prince, but we saw no sign of hi... once again I reminded myself of t... fragility of all expectations in Ha... The square was small but pretty, de... orated with red-blooming flambo... ant trees and iron benches th... looked brand new. I was just taki... in how much better maintained t... area looked than the last time I h... been there when a man came out ... a neighboring house whose rese... blance to the former president, Ré... Préval, seemed an odd coinciden... until it was borne in on us that ... really was Préval.

I had forgotten that Préval ... native of Marmelade, and had ... known that he'd retired there fr... the presidency. Despite the une... pectedness of the encounter, he ... mediately took us in hand, offer... to feed us and give us a bed a... show us everything. With the ra... aged peaks of the mountains ... tween Dondon and Marmela... fresh in my mind, I asked him if ... thought there was still hope for ... forestation. Préval told a paral... about an acquaintance of his w... had returned to Marmelade af... years of absence; she was horrif... at the clear-cut hills and thou... the peasant charcoal manufactur... should all be flung into prison. P... val asked her what she cooked w... at home and got the expected ... swer. Haitian peasants cannot ... ford to use charcoal themselves; ... them it is a cash crop, and alm... all of it is sent down to the to... and cities. It was a matter of ... mand rather than supply. Hait... peasants are neither stupid nor ... provident; they know the value ... the trees on the land, Préval s... but they also know the value ... their children. The production ... charcoal, with its ruinous con... quences, was a last resort to pay ... ucational expenses, or simply ... keep the children alive. For ref... estation ever to succeed, the pe... ant would have to be able to fin... living in the trees.

éval drove us (effortlessly and rtly, over complications in the that would have given me far serious pause) up to Habitation her, an old colonial coffee plan- n alongside the ruins of which a coffee and bamboo operation recently been started, with seed ey of a million dollars annually ive years from the Taiwanese rnment. The operation had the f success. Fast-growing bamboo cellent for soil conservation and coming increasingly popular as a truction material in Haiti; most ıe buildings in the coffee plant lved bamboo in their construc- and there was also a furniture ıry attached. The coffee opera- was still more promising; coffee need shade to prosper, which ıs that shade trees also must be ected and encouraged, and ywhere the bushes with their iant red berries stood in the ow of mango, almond, and or- trees. When Préval took us out- the compound of the new plant ve us a tour of the colonial ruins abitation Baucher, he greeted a old man who had built his mud on remnants of a two-hundred- -old foundation. Adjacent grew uple of dozen knee-high coffee , carefully shaded by a burlap ar- until the covering trees could : here was a man who had been ished a motive.

he coffee produced here is of ciently high quality to elude, al hoped, the current coffee is, in which prices have col- ed due to stockpiling by big orations like Nestlé. The plan- on bought coffee from 4,500 ll growers self-organized into ıps of fifteen each, acquiring r beans on a fair-trade basis at veen eighteen and twenty-one ian gourdes per pound, as op- d to the traditional eight. The e of this incentive was palpa- —enough projects like this one the Haitian hinterlands might n become viable for the popula- ı. Most promising of all, the of the Taiwanese grant had n to render the project au- omous at the end of five years. s kind of self-sufficiency was what Lavalas had always striven for, and it was also what globalization, on the American plan, wanted least, though Préval did not want to talk about that.

Toussaint Louverture had certainly ridden these roads in his era, Préval told us, and I again felt the curious foreshortening of time in Haiti, where all past events are held just on the edge of living memory, not much further back than yesterday. The new coffee and bamboo plantation sprang from the colonial ruins like a green shoot from the trunk of a severed tree. Perhaps the spirit of Toussaint walked with Préval. Toward the end of his rule, as legend had it, the people had addressed him as Papa Toussaint, and Préval's comportment with the people he met had that same feeling of kinship. It was not a baby-kissing exercise. Préval had rooted himself in the whole community of Marmelade as in a vastly extended family. Indeed he seemed to have successfully extended the cooperative principles of the traditional *lakou* to embrace the whole town and the region around it.

Due to insecurity and the fact that our headlights were not working, it was advisable to get off the road before dark, though I was sorry to leave Marmelade. As I unlocked the door to the truck, a woman slipped up to me and displayed the suppurating wound on her arm. "*Mêt*," she said, in a piteous tone. "Master."

By that I was genuinely appalled. "*Sé pa mêt ou mwen yé*," I told her. "I'm not your master." Préval had told us he never gave money, and we had seen for ourselves what he offered in its place: services, education, jobs, grain after grain of hope for the future; when we arrived he had been giving a math lesson to a local schoolboy about ten years old. I knew he was right, but I could not help myself. I gave her a dollar, though I couldn't look her in the eye.

The moon was full when we returned from Marmelade; moonlight and a measure of rum moved Sousonné to philosophize a little. "The problem that we have in Haiti," he told me, "is that mortality and natality are poorly controlled. There are too many births and not enough deaths. It is the poorest people who have the most children, and since these children cannot be educated, they become Chimè." He was describing, though in the abstract, the conditions that surrounded him here. Sousonné sent his own children down the road to school, at the price of the sort of sacrifices Préval had described, and at the same time he fed as many of the less fortunate children in the zone as he could afford, and taught the boys martial arts. Without him, those children spent their time scavenging for food or work (both very difficult to obtain), and amused themselves by killing songbirds on the wing with stones (at which their skill was remarkable). In time, if fortune smiled, Sousonné hoped to start a real school for them here, but he had no help other than his own thin resources; there was no outside aid.

One word usually means many things in Haiti, and Sousonné's use of the word "Chimè" carried me toward a deeper meaning. Before that term was coined, Haitian delinquent youths were called *malélevé* ("ill brought up") or, still more tellingly, *sansmaman* ("the motherless ones"). They were people who'd somehow reached adulthood without the nurture of the traditional *lakou*—communities that the combined forces of poverty and globalization had been shattering here for the last few decades. That was what made them so dangerous. The Chimè were indeed chimeras; ill fortune left them as unrealized shadows. With better luck they might have been human beings, but they weren't. These were the people Aristide had originally been out to salvage; "*Tout moun sé moun*" was his earliest motto ("Every man is a man").

In the beginning, Aristide had seemed to intend to build a *lakou* as large as the country. Something had thwarted the project, and the Second Revolution had gone into a kind of suspended animation, like the first. And yet Réné Préval had shown us that it was possible, after all, to build a *lakou* at least as large

as Marmelade. What it took was patience, a clear and undivided intention, and a modicum of material aid with no globalization strings attached. *Haiti Fleuri* was still possible.

"It should have been easy here," Tim Pershing had said, looking over his shoulder in the direction of Iraq. "Here you had a democratically elected government and a sympathetic population. And you didn't really have an armed opposition willing to confront the U.S." In 2003, just one year from the Bicentennial of Haitian Independence, when the fruits of the Second Revolution were expected to ripen, it no longer looked easy. Far from the spirit of Toussaint Louverture, more and more people were muttering Dessalines's slogan, *Koupé têt, boulé kay*. Another aphorism making the rounds was *Zombi goute sel, li pa vlé reté*, applied to the centuries-old Haitian addiction to power: "Once the zombie tastes the salt, he does not want to stop."

If Haiti can fairly be blamed for a few pernicious political habits, these are matched, if not overshadowed, by the American genius for getting it wrong—for example, the notorious USAID program to exterminate the Haitian pigs in the wholly erroneous belief that they were infected with swine fever and somehow capable of communicating the disease to pigs in the United States. The *kochon kreyol* is a black-haired, long-eared razorback capable of prospering on what it can scavenge. It glows with an historical numinosity, since one such pig was sacrificed to the spirits of the thousands of slaves who had died in French Saint Domingue during the legendary Vodou ceremony that launched the Revolution at Bwa Kayman in 1791. The pigs were what the average Haitian *paysan* had in place of a bank account; their annual sale paid school fees for his children. USAID had a replacement program, but because the Stateside emigrant hogs required a standard of living higher than that of the average Haitian human being, it was ludicrously unsuccessful. In the course of this debacle, innumerable Haitian hearts and minds went permanently AWOL. Fifteen years later, an Italian veterinary volunteer I ran into in one of the up-market Cap-Haïtien hotels said with frustrated bewilderment, "I don't understand what's wrong with these people—they don't want to show me their pigs!"

Even on the nongovernmental end of the U.S. aid spectrum, pigheadedness is abundant. Haiti's Institut de Sauvegarde du Patrimoine National (ISPAN) had a well thought through plan to turn the area surrounding Bwa Kayman into a national park, and they had the skill and the experience to do it, but no resources; their hope for money had vanished into the aid embargo. What they are getting instead is an evangelical missionary project from a Stateside organization called Men for Missions International, whose intention is to extirpate the Devil from Haiti within fifty years. ISPAN regional director Eddy Lubin showed me a page of their publication winningly entitled "Recon Report"; the plan was as military as the title suggested. First they would soften up the mentality of the population by giving away thousands of solar-powered radios locked to the frequency of the evangelical station, 4VEH. Then they would mount crusades to destroy all the traditional Vodouisant communities in the country: Souvenance, Soukri, Nan Kanpèch. The brochures are illustrated with photos of the target sites, including the ancient *mapou* of Bwa Kayman, which, since it is inhabited by Satan, would presumably have to be uprooted.

Next morning, the clink of mattocks resumed in the treeless hills above Sousonné's compound, and here and there smoke rose from charcoal makers' fires, though I could not quite figure out where they'd found wood to burn. At dawn I climbed the shaly slope to one of the mines of stones. The heat had not yet risen, but I was sweat-drenched halfway through the climb and had to stop three times for breath before I reached the summit. Below, the spring from which most people in this zone hauled their water was shaded by substantial trees. Before the last stage of desperation, Haitians will not cut trees around a spring, and this one was also a s[acred] source, the *reposoir* of a spirit.

When I reached the height, t[he] view was panoramic; to the nort[h] could see across the whole Northe[rn] Plain to the smoky haze above t[he] sea, and westward, beyond the lo[w] lands of Bwa Kayman, the Ba[y] d'Acul glittered in the morni[ng] light. There one of Columbus's f[our] three ships had sunk, and his m[en] had used the timbers to build th[e] first New World settlement.

At my back, a lone miner was [ex]ploiting his claim. His tools we[re] pick, a sledgehammer, and th[ree] pieces of blunt iron that looked l[ike] broken mower blades. In the twe[nty] minutes I stayed there he mana[ged] to dislodge a handful of gray gra[vel]. On a good day, he told me, he m[ight] earn as much as 200 gourdes by s[ell]ing rock to the men on the tru[cks] that arrived below—the equivale[nt] at the currently vicious excha[nge] rate, of about five U.S. dollars, bu[t] did not expect this to be a good [day] because one of his feet was hurt. [In] fact, this sum was substantially h[ig]her than the minimum wage paid [in] light assembly by the foreign tex[tile] factories near the Port-au-Prince [air]port—a mere 66 gourdes, tho[ugh] there was talk that the state mean[t to] raise it to 120.

I needed another twenty min[utes] to crawl back down the rockslide. [A] false step would start a little avalan[che]. Every rainfall rips the tear still d[eep]er into the mountainside. I thought that there was nothing w[orse] than charcoal, but the mine of st[ones] was definitely worse. It was the [work] of desperation. From somewhere b[elow] came the tap of a drum, resonat[ing] the morning calm; it might have b[een] Sousonné trying his handiwork. [A] voice sang in the back of my mi[nd]:

*Figyè, mapou yo*
*Yo tout fin peri-o . . .*
*Pa gen kote anko*
*Pou lwa yo rete*

It came from the chant by the t[ra]ditional group Wawa, and it ha[d] the force of an old Vodou song.

The figs and the *mapou*
Have just finished dying . . .
No place left any more
For the spirits to stay.

# THE WORLD'S BIGGEST TAB

## Banqueting upon borrowing in the nation's capital

*By Wayne Biddle*

Washington is a city where the
rents of public-school children
ve found it necessary from time to
ne to donate toilet paper to the
ident lavatories,
st pages of Shake-
eare and Melville
applied for primi-
ve purposes that
ose geniuses would
ve understood and
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rsed as a natural
e of clean little
ctangular sheets.
learly the citizens
this capital are
t averse to pitch-
g in, to taking on
few hardships and
allenges in their
es of dignity and
eedom, even if it
eans digging into
eir own pockets
r new johns and
ll partitions at the
cal elementary.
*his is the business*
*e've chosen*. Where did the $745
illion education budget go? *I didn't*
*k who gave the order*. Why can't



Keyshawn read? *Because it had nothing to do with business*.

That new four score and seven billion for Iraq sounded high, though, albeit an obvious underestimate to anyone who ever priced a complete bathroom renovation. Nobody swallowed it whole, especially not the young Republican "Pork Buster" congressmen from districts in Florida, Tennessee, or Arizona, where bringing Jesus to darkest Africa and breaking real-estate sales records are still top-shelf preparations for national office. "The old regime built palaces while letting the schools decay," the president left town to tell the U.N. General Assembly, who ignored him and then went wild for a man from the land of *la minette* who later pressed his bare lips upon the first lady's fingers. "The old regime built up armies and weapons while allowing the nation's infrastructure to crumble." Fortunately the lights did not arc out up there on First Avenue as he spoke, but there were still hundreds of thousands of voters in and around the District of Columbia who read the news by candlelight, their deregulated infrastructure in tatters after Hurricane Isabel, their schools a chronic pile of *chraa*, their natural-born American instinct to cut the welfare rolls extending now to this panhandler in the White House.

Unlike a strapped homeowner, however, the president essentially has no credit-card limit, so the $87 billion will simply be added to the

*ayne Biddle lives and writes in the ashington, D.C., area. His last letter om Washington, "As Though Truth ere a Fool," appeared in the September '03 issue.*

ree's a Crotch" © Christian Vincent/Forum Gallery, New York, N.Y.

boys,

Bedouins,
and

castratos

by

Jeremy Sanders
Nichols

A story of the politically impotent man.

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$480 billion he's already borrowing to make ends meet in 2004. The fact that this money does not come out of anyone's pocket—that the money for Iraq does not displace domestic programs on a dollar-for-dollar basis—but is just appended to the nation's jumbo mortgage note, turns it into a political abstraction, which in Washington means it can be finessed for the near future, which is the only kind of future that matters here. Samuel Johnson once advised an old friend's wayward son that "great debts are like cannon; of loud noise, but little danger," a counterintuitive notion that helps explain, for example, why TimeWarner and Argentina continue to exist. Unless Congress either cuts the president off (freezes the deficit) or puts hard cash into his account (raises taxes), he's free to keep living in a Skull and Bones brat's dreamworld, running up the largest tab in history. There is no sign that Congress as currently composed will do anything of the sort, of course.

The few legislators of recent vintage who possessed the strict-father instincts to accomplish this were largely flushed out of town by 1995. One of the most prominent, former New Hampshire Republican senator Warren Rudman, decamped to the L Street office of 500-member international corporate law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison. As one of the namesake sponsors of the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, which forced presidents to slash or "sequester" appropriations across the board if deficits exceeded statutory limits, he has continued to play scold regarding the national debt. (The law was ditched in 1990 as the deficit went through the roof anyway and a 32 percent sequester of defense spending loomed.) That Paul, Weiss is longtime counsel to TimeWarner, whose perennial $20+ billion debt burden would feel the upward pressure on interest rates from a U.S. Treasury hogging the bond market, is one of those background details that tend to go unmentioned when Rudman speaks in public.

Astronomical deficits are an "amorphous" issue, he admits, but in the mid and long term they are "ve deleterious" and have a "sinister fect," especially on internation trade. His ideal is the "small N England town" where residents co vene once a year to add a few pe nies to the property tax if they w new police cruisers. He seems aw that this kind of metaphoric imag has zero impact in Washingto lamenting that his recent morni press conference about the defi crisis wasn't held in the evening listeners could hit the Press Club afterward for solace. Rudman a happens to be lead director of t Raytheon Company, one of the ch beneficiaries of myriad billio poured into the Pentagon's "S Wars" anti-missile scheme duri the last two decades. He is theref paid to be sensitive to even the m featherweight brake on so-called c cretionary spending by the gove ment, such as weapons developme due to skyrocketing debt.

Nonetheless, his budget compu tions do shock, at least in the Ka ian sense of the mathemati sublime. Last summer, the Congr sional Budget Office projected $ trillion in deficits over the next years. Using more realistic econo assumptions than the CBO's rat rigid model, Rudman and his searchers at several nonprofits t analyze such matters figure a cumu tive deficit of $5 trillion, with an al federal interest payments alo reaching $470 billion, or 15 perc of revenues, by 2013. And this is from a worst-case scenario. A sim exercise by number crunchers Goldman Sachs easily reached a ure of $5.5 trillion. According to Rudman groups, to balance the b get by 2013, even under the fa optimistic assumptions behind th calculations, would "require rais individual and corporate inco taxes by 27 percent; cutting So Security by 60 percent; cutting fense by 73 percent; or cutting programs other than defense, ho land security, Social Security, a Medicare by 40 percent."

The Treasury's authority to an debt is limited by Congress, but o in the way that extramarital se limited by the Sixth Commandm

forgiving God. Last February, government rammed against the l ceiling, which then stood at ł trillion. For the next three ıths, accounting legerdemain used to keep Washington run- ; until Congress enacted a new t of $7.384 trillion. The CBO casts that yet another higher c will be needed by late summer 4, and on and on, world without amen.

erhaps this is why young Repub- ı fiscal conservatives in Congress , as Tom Feeney of Florida, Zach mp of Tennessee, and Jeff Flake ırizona, who dared to question, ever fleetingly, the president's ıest for Iraq, are ridiculed as en-eyeshade types" by their own y's ideologues. One either takes numbers seriously—even half- seriously would do—or resorts to name-calling.

this is all so obvious to an old itol Hill warhorse like Warren ıman, why isn't anybody current- ı power up there doing some- g about it? Part of the explana- rests in the general decline in sensus-building debate in favor of h-and-burn rhetoric that now racterizes politics from coast to it. (Whether he comprehends it ot, Herr Doktor Schwarzenegger s the same ice jam in California, ı its whatever-billion-dollar cit, boilerplated spending, and new-taxes mantra.) There is a vasive understanding from suite uite in the congressional office dings along Independence and ıstitution avenues that the sea nge of 1995 flowed over the dead ies of deficit-reduction deal mak- Moreover, Bush the elder proba- had to leave town because of ls he made in 1990. In other ds, there is fear of exile.

ormer CBO director Robert Reis- ıer, one of Rudman's occasional s, sets the probability at nil that ımstances such as those that evap- ed the huge deficits of the 1980s— slative cooperation between Con- s and the White House, de- lerated military spending after the iet Union's collapse, tax windfalls ı a supercharged stock market—




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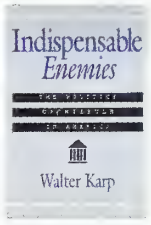


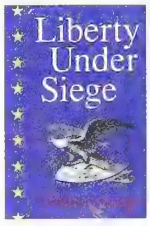

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will happen again. Even if Wall Street were to roar back and blow another doublebubble as big as the Ritz, the president has cut taxes on the very top brackets who would rake in the surge. And the nation now faces a demographic wave of codgers with unprecedented retirement and health-care expenses, who will be reaching out for entitlement programs long funded by IOU's that represent off-the-books liabilities of roughly $25 trillion.

"Deficits, of course, don't dampen the pace at which new problems needing public-sector responses emerge," Reischauer says. "But when you lack resources to deal with these problems, several things happen. First, the proposed solutions are more symbolic than substantive. The public is then discouraged."

There is no shortage of Democrats in Congress willing to chat at length about how the philosophical agenda behind big Republican deficits—the "starve the beast" strategy—is to play a kind of brinkmanship that pushes public services into the private sector. Downsizing government means upsizing enterprise if you want the same amenities. But this is an abstraction, too, until nature expresses itself in the form of pageless copies of *Macbeth* on the boys'-room floor or a lot of old baby boomers with no money in the bank who love to vote.

"I think we shouldn't be surprised if the American people are not ready to take vigorous action if they're endlessly told by the politicians that the [Social Security] trust fund will take care of everything until 2037," says Pete Peterson, a Nixon-era secretary of commerce who chairs the New York Federal Reserve. "The trust fund is neither funded nor should it be trusted. It is a fiscal oxymoron, and whether you have a trust fund or don't, you're still going to have to do the same three things you do without a trust fund: you're going to have to suddenly and probably cut benefits to millions of Americans that have very little savings; you have to increase taxes dramatically; or you have to try to go out and borrow this money."

Therein lies the political utility of not telling anyone, young or old, what the cost of rebuilding Iraq will be until right before that money is needed. Last summer the CBO published an updated analysis of the long-term costs of the president's military programs. Besides finding that his plans are about half a trillion dollars more expensive than the Department of Defense has budgeted for, the CBO spelled out plainly that "they exclude costs for continuing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and for other activities conducted as part of the global war on terrorism." With what must be a very large tongue in its cheek, the CBO added that "DoD does not expect spending for such contingencies to be unnecessary." Rather, "it expects to request funding for them using annual emergency supplemental appropriations, as needed." In other words, we'll let y'all know when the time comes, but not a moment sooner.

The legions of green-eyeshade types with double-digit GS ratings on the CBO's payroll are not trained to embrace uncertainty. They churn their software forward and project a cost of $59 billion in 2004, "based on the assumption that maintaining an occupation force of 200,000 troops in Iraq and Kuwait would cost $3.8 billion per month," plus another monthly $1.1 billion thrown in by the Pentagon for Afghanistan and those "other activities." As long as buildings in Baghdad are being blown up faster than they are rebuilt, these numbers are fluky, too, but better than none.

Buried in the CBO analysis are some dazzling factoids that demonstrate why even the sharpest green-eyeshader never quite knows what the U.S. military is for, except that whatever it is will cost more than expected. For example, the Navy intends to maintain fifty-five attack submarines over the next two decades, at a cost of $5 or $6 billion a year, for which there has been no enemy opponent whatsoever since the Soviet fleet's demise. While Annapolis grads are busy avoiding collisions with whales and Japanese trawlers in these fun subs, West Pointers will be deposing despots with tanks and helicopters whose average age will approach thirty years, because of an ongoing inability to define the type, cost, and deli very pace of new equipment. S wonder that such a force is deploy eagerly against Afghanistan and I but with infinite caution agai North Korea.

"The Administration was ask over and over again [about postw costs in Iraq], and the number w always zero," Rosa DeLauro, a De ocrat on the House Budget Comm tee, said recently. "There is no pl for postwar Iraq. There is no pl for the U.S. economy. They want turn this all into patriotism." long as the president can sell his wellian message that the nation engaged in a perpetual war of s vival against terrorism, he will have to address the red ink of make-believe budget, because American people have always rall behind huge deficits during wartir

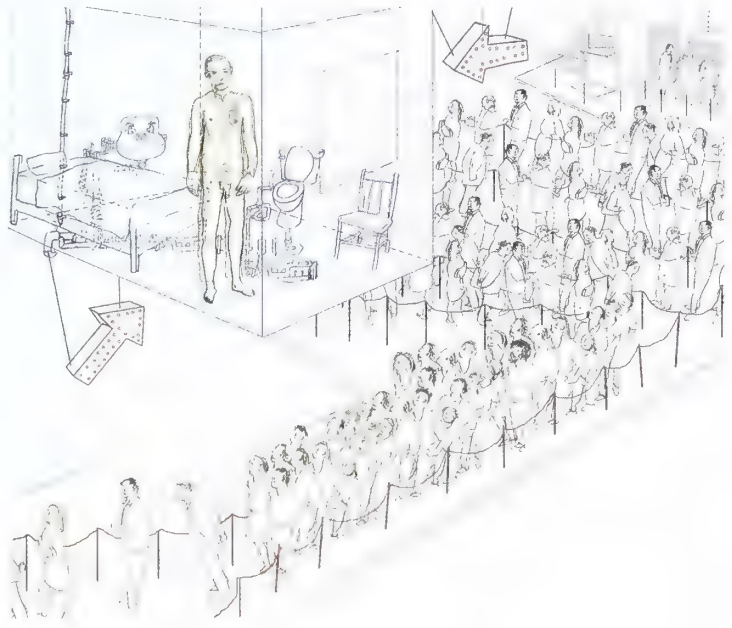
Reaching warily toward the bo shelf for a timeworn copy of *19* seems unavoidable here. The att ney general's relentless enthusia for expanding the Patriot Act wh the president appears endlessly on tube at one military rally after other—this is the stuff that use jolt English departments to life! the White House has no more to from their deconstructed asses t from an ex-senator's. The presid need fear only nature itself, the namic sublime of whirlwinds that across the equator from Africa then smack up the Potomac, the e trons that bust out of a brittle hi tension line along Lake Erie and t cascade at the speed of light tow Camp David, the tick-tock of 77 lion biological clocks winding d toward the golden years, the wrat voters sick of being fleeced on be of a 2,000-year-old religious con in Araby.

"These things are connected, t don't exist in a vacuum," said Lauro, referring to Medicare and cial Security and war and taxes education and the rest of the mongous thing called the U.S. ernment. Green-eyeshade types starting to bite their nails all town, an activity far more fam to many Americans than the p dent who wanted his $87 bil now may think.

# THE CRIMINAL MASTERMIND IS CONFINED

*By Peter Ho Davies*

The Criminal Mastermind is con-ed in a transparent cell, suspended glass chains from the roof of a large ehouse in what was the old meat-king/performance-district. The cell is pended in order that Criminal Master-nd may be observed ays, and from all an-s, by his guards (it uld not do for him to able to conceal a e or a razor blade be-th his foot in a more nventional holding l) and by the parties ourists and school-ldren who regularly it the maximum-urity facility. It is nsidered doubly ben-ial to allow these vis-s, since the example he Criminal Master-nd necessarily acts as eterrent to criminal ivity, and his con-nt observation by members of the blic further reduces his chances of es-pe. The Criminal Mastermind, it should be noted, is not allowed any visitors of his own, such as friends or family members, though rumors persist that they do join the lines outside the facility and buy tickets along with everyone else.



All of the Criminal Mastermind's possessions, it should be further explained, are transparent. His furniture is made of Lucite, the bed and chairs upholstered by plastic cushions containing a clear gel that is nonetheless quite comfortable (it is not the intention of the authorities to offer anything less than humane conditions for the Criminal Mastermind) and that additionally can be warmed in the prisoner's Perspex microwave oven to a pleasant temperature on cool days. His sheets and clothing are also transparent, woven of coconut fiber, in the traditional Filipino style. Such linens have long been prized luxuries in Filipino society on account of their diaphanous lightness and have been found to be much more comfortable, and therefore humane, than the plastic clothing and bedding initially issued to the Criminal Mastermind, in which he was apt to sweat, and which was found to fog in the region of the armpits and crotch. Indeed, souvenir smocks of the kind the prisoner wears are for sale in the small gift shop outside the facility (along with glass mugs and even a rather whimsical snow globe in the shape of the prisoner's cell) and for a time shortly after introduction became quite a fashionable item (for reasons of taste, naturally, the prisoner's coconut-

*r Ho Davies is the author of the story ections* Equal Love *and* The Ugliest use in the World. *His last story for* per's Magazine, *"What You Know," eared in the January 2001 issue.*

ration by Lori Parsons

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fiber pants and undergarments are not for sale, public nudity being a criminal offense, and one for which additional days are constantly being added to the Criminal Mastermind's sentence). It has been found that these items' sales are enhanced by not being exact replicas of the Criminal Mastermind's property, to which end the phrase "Clearly Just" has been embroidered on the breast pocket of the smocks and etched on the mugs. It may be recalled that franchises for these gift concessions, as well as for a variety of fast-food carts around the facility, were awarded to family members of the Criminal Mastermind's victims at trial, as due reparations for their losses, and to forestall their inhumane desires for the death penalty.

The transparency of the Criminal Mastermind's cell was considered when first constructed to be both a penal and an architectural triumph (several government offices have subsequently incorporated the high-tensile transparent materials developed for the cell into their designs to suggest greater openness). However, as time has gone on, numerous visitors to the facility have noted that what remains hidden is the Criminal Mastermind's black heart. The visitors' suggestion box at the facility, indeed, became crammed with ideas for how this might be solved, and so several years ago special steps were taken to rectify this oversight, specifically the installation of translucent panels, or windows, into the Criminal Mastermind's chest, and for good measure his temples. The medical procedures involved were not in themselves revolutionary or particularly arduous, though these refinements did require the costly and time-consuming construction of a suspended and transparent operating theater (fortunately, this facility is now being utilized in a teaching hospital). The Criminal Mastermind's heart, incidentally, is not black at all—that is merely a trick of the lighting. Through the expedient of a small bulb fitted just below his sternum, which can be turned on for a timed period by remote buttons outside the cell—a "hands-on" refinement to the facility—the heart itself can be illuminated and seen to be a dark, purplish red. A similar arrangement was initially installed to illuminate the Criminal Mastermind's brain, but it was removed after the guards complained that they were tired of hearing visitors push the cranium-bulb button and say such things as, "Look, an idea! A criminal idea!" over and over again.

And yet, in more recent years, the Criminal Mastermind's cell—which rose as high as the second most popular tourist attraction in the country in its first three years of operation—has been steadily losing popularity. There was a sharp peak in ticket sales in the fifth year of operation, after the release of a film of his crimes, but this proved to be only a temporary reversal of the trend, and subsequently attendance has dropped in each quarter of each year since. The expensive and widely publicized surgery to install the transparent panels in the Criminal Mastermind's chest and temples was only the latest in a series of efforts to revive the facility's popularity as a visitor destination, but even this has barely arrested the declining attendance figures. If the current trend persists it is likely that within two years ticket receipts will no longer support the costs of incarceration, despite existing cutbacks in services. It has been noted by criminologists across the country that the deterrent effect of the Criminal Mastermind's incarceration, which peaked in the three years after his capture, when criminal activity of all kinds was seen to fall sharply, has begun to wear off. States have recorded a rise in white-collar crime, theft, and violence for some time, but in the last two years "spree and caper" crime has seen a upturn, and the latest alarming figures suggest that even so-called petty crime or crime-of-the-century crimes—the specialty of the Criminal Mastermind himself—is again on the rise. The conclusion drawn from this

[1] *Early plans had called for the blinding of the Criminal Mastermind and the removal of one or both of his eyes with panels, a.k.a. "windows to the soul," but this proposal was rejected. Although visitors felt uncomfortable being themselves seen by the Criminal Mastermind, it was judged that his seeing himself to be seen was essential to his punishment. For the comfort of visitors, laser pointers can now be rented (at the audio-guide stand) to deter the Criminal Mastermind's gaze.*

ces is that the Criminal Master-
l is no longer a very impressive
e, that his very piteous state,
er than deterring people from
e, might encourage them to think
they could do better at it than
poor specimen. Others, indeed,
accused the facility of being a
ı and the Criminal Mastermind
self of being an impostor, or a
ge of the state. It might be noted,
ne of many ironies of the case,
the Criminal Mastermind's own
ıse—in which he argued that he
l not be the Criminal Master-
l, despite DNA evidence, since
were the Criminal Mastermind
ould not by definition have been
ıred—seems to have anticipated
outcome. (This defense, of course,
dismissed at the time as merely
more example of the Criminal
ermind's nefarious genius, and
tly afterward he abandoned his
plea of not guilty by reason
of logical inconsistency.[2])

ı light of the above trends, it
been decided to encourage the
ınal Mastermind to escape. By
expedient it is hoped that new
r can be added to the Criminal
ermind's somewhat sullied rep-
ion. It is argued furthermore
the idea of the Criminal Mas-
ind loose on the streets will en-
age the general population to
ın in their own homes and to
hten their levels of watchful-
—both of which effects are ex-
ed to reduce rising crime rates
iently to more than offset any
ional crimes that the Criminal
termind may himself commit.
ırally, the authorities will in the
im make every effort to recap-
the Criminal Mastermind. We
in all likelihood look forward to
cessful cycle of escape and re-

capture, escape and recapture, which should ensure that visitor revenues and crime rates can be managed successfully for the foreseeable future.

To this end, therefore, vigilance has been slackened around the Criminal Mastermind on the assumption that he has only been "waiting for his chance." Guard numbers have been further reduced, blind spots designed into their patrol routes, and a 24-second window of opportunity inserted in the rotation of shifts. And yet the Criminal Mastermind, previously presumed to be merely "biding his time," has with typical cunning shown no inclination to escape. It has been suggested that, observing the slackening security, he has been insulted and considers for this reason escape to be beneath him. In light of this it has been decided to incentivize his escape. Initially, this was achieved in small stages—dismissing the chefs previously employed to produce his food, curtailing his occasional privacy privileges (defecation, masturbation), limiting his appeals to one a month. None of these modest changes has effected the desired escape, however, and so more traditional, so-called throwback measures—surprise midnight cell inspections, cavity searches, and occasional beatings—have been introduced. Although these measures have not yet had the desired effect of prompting the Criminal Mastermind to escape, they have had the surprising but gratifying result of raising admissions to the attraction for the first time in four years. Beatings and other indignities, while a surprise to the prisoner, are widely advertised and have become a popular attraction. Even though the Criminal Mastermind himself now recognizes the presence of larger crowds as a sign of what is to come, the lack of surprise is more than compensated by his cowering and cringing, which always draws appreciative applause from the spectators. Sightings of tears—themselves transparent, of course—are particularly prized. Indeed, so successful has this new development been that security has been raised once more, and plans for the Criminal Mastermind to escape shelved for the time being. ■

*that this was the end of his wily legal wering, as the animatronic replica of urtroom proceedings in the facility's ient demonstrates. His revised plea of on all counts, with its additional con-n, negotiated with the D.A., to one of hubris in return for consideration at cing, was also rejected by the court, the hubris in question referred to the title Criminal Mastermind and was ht to be laying the basis for a later ap-n grounds of mistaken identity.*


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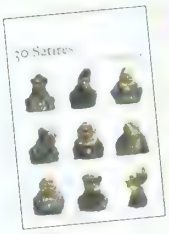



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# EW BOOKS

*John Leonard*



rom her splendid memoir *Lost in Translation* (1989), we know that once upon a time, under a nut tree in Cracow, Eva Hoff- was a poet. That was before ada, Texas, Boston, and New ; before teaching jobs, journal- and psychoanalysis. Decades lat- her ferocious meditation AFTER H KNOWLEDGE, MEMORY, ORY, AND THE LEGACY OF HOLOCAUST (PublicAffairs, , she is instead an archaeologist, ng up strata of the "unspeakable" e twentieth century's moral ruins. as graduated from ghost stories t girlhood, emigration, and the arable lightness of American be- ing to masterly essays on ethics and political science. Like Simone Weil, she will burn, starve, or parachute herself into lucidity.

Hoffman takes her title from a T. S. Eliot poem that asks, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" The knowledge here is of the Holocaust in its many protean forms: as an event, a fable, an allegory, a narrative, even a memory cult. For such evil there can be no forgiveness, certainly not from a child of survivors like Eva, who received her parents' traumatic experience in "talismanic litanies"; who belongs to a "second generation" that "internalized" the problematic past only to find itself stuck in a "metaphysics of nullity and absence"; who had to bump and puzzle her way through silence, stigma, "sadism and humiliation," "placeless loss," "dimensionless melancholia," collective violence, and dark topographies of "Before"; who admits to "significance envy," a second-generation resentment of one's parents for having monopolized all the "existential grandeur" of authentic suffering; who is suspicious of sentimentality, victimology, identity politics, "moral preciousness," and anyone thinking of the Shoah as a personal entitlement; who concedes that we "cannot undo the past, redo it, heal it, cure it," so perhaps the time has come to "turn away" from it, to let it gently go.



She has read books, talked to witnesses, looked into case histories, gone to Germany and Poland. She has smart things to say about eroticism and cruelty in the camps, hysterical blindness among Cambodian refugees, Zygmunt Bauman and "the production of distance," W. G. Sebald and Binjamin Wilkomirski, Zionism and Armenians. She is even tendentious on the fraught subject of 9/11, laying waste to a strawman hate-America left she could have found only in the tub-thumping blogosphere. But synopsis vulgarizes her artful glaze—coat upon layered coat of transparent intellection. Eva Hoffman finds in a village in the Ukraine the primitive house in whose attic a peasant family hid her parents and a bunker in the woods. Then she advises us: "There is a Jewish tradition which says that we must grieve for the dead fully and deeply; but that mourning must also come to its end." And perhaps for the Shoah, "that moment has come."

John le Carré is just as mournful in ABSOLUTE FRIENDS (Little, Brown, $26.95) as he was forty years ago in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*. Not even the collapse in 1989 of the nonprofit police states of Eastern Europe cheered him up. Since the death of his con-man father, he has never had anything to believe in. At least there is still America to hate. And before *Absolute Friends* turns into a conspiracy by the CIA and the German military police to behave as badly as Al Qaeda or Shining Path, it seems to be a return to his best form, if not quite *The Honorable Schoolboy* then perhaps *The Secret Pilgrim*. Introducing us to Ted and Sasha, old friends and former double agents who will do almost anything together as long as it's not for money, Carré appears to be aiming

*Playing the Clarinet* (Sketch for *Death Triumphant*), 1944, by [illegible] © Felix Nussbaum Haus uck mit der Sammlung der Niedersächsischen Sparkassenstiftung [illegible] Bad Essen/Bosse 2002.
raph of Auschwitz: © Hulton Archive/Getty Images

for the avuncular instead of straining for the Conrad; his subordinate clauses are no more sinuous than they have to be, nor his sentences compounded unto migraine headaches.

And we want to like long, tall, English Ted, major's son, misfit, athlete, actor, "dreamer and pretender," who sleeps at night in Munich with a waitress from a Turkish kebab café and guides by day stray tourists around Mad King Ludwig's Bavarian castles, as much as we feel sorry for short, crippled Sasha, an East German nonviolent anarchist and "one-man chaos theory" who hides film cartridges in condoms that he buries in tubs of ice cream. Never mind that their radical politics are explained away by the usual oedipal revenge rubbish. If Ted and Sasha opposed the war in Vietnam, they also did their best to bring down Ulbricht and his Stasi. It makes sense that they should want to team up again in some idealistic cause. What's ludicrous is that either should imagine for a minute that enlisting "the best unbought minds in every major discipline" to teach in "Counter-Universities" in "corporation-free academic zones," paid for by laundered Arab money, could possibly be such a cause. For such innocence, John le Carré will punish them.

It is Graham Robb's mordant thesis in STRANGERS: HOMOSEXUAL [illegible] (Norton, $27.95) that in spite of the laws against sodomy in England and Europe at the time, "inverts" more often than not went unpunished because "Victorian society, like the 'primitive' cultures discovered by its missionaries and explorers, assigned a shamanic role to sexual strangers." The prurient interest in the bedroom behaviors of, say, Johann Winckelmann, Hans Christian Andersen, and Oscar Wilde "was the mark of an unconscious or grudging perception that gay men and women had special knowledge, that they formed a kind of existential avant-garde and were somehow more at home in the modern world than the protected majority."

If so, Robb doesn't prove it. But the author of biographies of Balzac, Hugo, and Rimbaud doesn't need to; he already has his excuse to wander goatlike over hot rocks. "Nineteenth-century homosexuals lived under a cloud," he notes, "but it seldom rained." The Dark Ages really arrived in the twentieth century, though it isn't absolutely necessary to believe this, either. The odd thing about sex is that it always seems to have been more deviant, or less, some other time. For instance, "Early Christian theologians, Romantic poets and 20th-century queer theorists all espoused the view that, after a cataclysmic moment in human history—the fall of Man, the death of God, the modernist 'fracturing' of thought and knowledge—a Golden Age of sexual indeterminacy came to an end."

Robb makes merciless fun of a medical profession that wasted decades looking at anuses and insisting that pederasts couldn't pee straight. Morphine, camphor, and strychnine were prescribed as cures; then, after they didn't work, radiation, hormone treatments, electroshock, and lobotomies. He has almost as much fun with "Gentle Jesus," the Son of Man androgynized—"how strong and yet how lovely and lissome in his limbs," as Gerard Manley Hopkins said in a sermon in Lancashire in 1879—but most of all he enjoys telling us about crooked fingers, green carnations, velvet ties, pink tattoos, gondoliers, and poodles; horseback riding and excessive use of the sewing machine; Jane Austen's Rear Admirals, Charlotte Brontë's love letters to Ellen Nussey, Nikolai Gogol's confession to a priest, and Gustav Flaubert in the baths of Cairo; *Leaves of Grass*, *Billy Budd*, *The Wind in the Willows*, Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market," and Owen Wister's Virginian!



Anonymous tintype, c. 1880. Artwork courtesy International Center of Photography, New York City © collection of Robert Flynt. From *Dear Friends: American Photographs of Men Together, 1840–1918*, by David Deitcher (Abrams)

Did you know that Thomas Jefferson, when revising the laws of the state of Virginia in 1777, recommended cutting half-inch holes through the cartilage in the noses of "sodomitical" women? That Diderot wrote a lesbian novel with a lustful Mother Superior? That Poe's Auguste Dupin, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot were all gay, not to mention Miss Marple and Nero Wolfe? That Holmes, in fact, was modeled on Oscar Wilde? On behalf of all these delightful *Strangers*, let Lytton Strachey have the last word: "Why, I wish to know, is it perfectly moral for me to copulate with a personage whose sexual organs are different from mine own, and perfectly immoral for me to copulate with a personage whose sexual organs are not different?"

David Denby, in AMERICAN [illegible] (Little, Brown, $24.95), punishes himself. It's as if the film critic for *The New Yorker* wished down upon his feverish head all those wide-screen fantasies and demons of the Hollywood Moloch he so eloquently deplored: the lucky strike, the fast buck, the quick getaway, the big score. His novelist wife is leaving him, he's watching too much Internet porn, and he needs a million dollars to hold on to his roomy apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. So just as the bubble is about to burst, he plunges everything into technology stocks and tethers himself to the financial-news cable channels. This is a cultivated man who breakfasts with Merrill Lynch analyst Henry Blodget, who dines at parties at Sam Waksal's (not that Waksal favored him with a Martha Stewart inside tip), who has read Theodore Dreiser as well as George Gilder, and who nevertheless will lose hundreds of thousands of dollars before our anguished eyes, a victim which, a horned beast, he emerges from the nightmare with this book. this agitation, as if Bellow and DeLillo had seized the sorry day

# N EVIL

## e ragged core of a sweet apple

*William H. Gass*

sed in this essay:

*n Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, by Susan Neiman. nceton University Press, 2002. 304 pages. $29.95.

the motorcar evil? Of course ot, because it can have no in- ntions, no interior life, nurse sentments, and harbor no mal- n daily life it has become com- er than the cold. In noral realm the auto pizzazz. It is merely an ument of evil, crip- or killing thousands year, consuming of the resources of earth, eviscerating as routinely as butch- neir beef, poisoning tmosphere, fostering ons of equality and nion, encouraging and macho competi- , facilitating adoles- fornication, and rav- the countryside. Its offspring are garages, changes, and gas sta- . Popular delusions, destruction, increas- asualties, do not make notorcar evil, because consequences were aimed at. The word gue for the damage it s "collateral." But the considerable obstacle lling the car "evil" is ts effects are easily explicable. on monoxide is odorless, but s the extent of its mystery. The we pay for our automobiles seems more onerous to us than the cost of their use. Just add air bags and buckle up. Our callous indifference to ruinous truth may be less readily formulated.



Perhaps the cigarette is. Evil. Because it has within it, like Old Nick in "nicotine," habituating elements that mimic the resolutions of intention. Because it encourages cancer to attack the lips that lip it, the lungs that suck its smoke, the eyes its blown smoke stings. Suppose the hands that held a wheel too many hours, too many miles, so many gallons, began to lose their fingers. Then how would we feel? That justice had been done? For there is something that's suitable about dying from your vices: playing the slots, wasting water, eating burgers. If sins only sickened the sinner, if cramp crippled the fingers of the forger, if every quarter fed to the toothy machine clogged the player's small intestine, there would be some satisfaction in this world. A few zealots—foolish optimists about a moral universe—believe that AIDS is God's punishment for buggery, and that just deserts are at last being generously served. What of such thoughts? Is it in their vicinity that evil really lies? What sort of heart beats at that rate?

I have for some time insisted that every virtue has seven vices, and one day I intend to prove it. I have used neatness as a showcase because it cancels, hides, and opposes history. Miss Tidy believes that everything has its place and that everything should be there. To deny the parade happened, ticker tape and flag-wave must be swept and furled; to pretend the party was never thrown, its empties need to be recycled, its tin horns packed away; to be able to say some war was never foolishly waged, its wounds needlessly suffered, accounts must be scrubbed, documents shredded, evidence dug up, and history rewritten. This starchy daughter of the regiment loves roll call, frequent inspections, and the constancy of the pyramids. Moreover, one might argue without being simply contrary that chastity is a vice and adultery a virtue. Which one does the sonnet favor?

Nor is any virtue, in Immanuel Kant's terms, unqualifiedly virtuous, for if we were to give our allegiance exclusively to one of them (by dreaming of a society without hunger, for instance), we should have to sacrifice too much else. So that no one might starve,

*n H. Gass is the author of, most re-* Tests of Time *(Knopf). His last es-* Harper's Magazine, *"In Defense of the" appeared in the November 1999 issue.*

*lel diablo*, by Rufino Tamayo © Estate of Rufino Tamayo alkwijk/Art Resource, New York City

we might give everyone a job. To do that (and the U.S.S.R. and China did do that) we find ourselves asking six men to dig a hole that two might easily shovel, and demand that women we've trained as nurses sweep the street instead. People will not look for or find congenial jobs but labor when and where they are posted. Making work for others is one such assignment. Roads are repaired with forks and spoons when the aim is full employment, and slowdowns are de rigueur. Shop stewards take frequent breaks and the feather bedding is of swan's down. Hurry up and wait is the military solution. When standing in ranks or queues life is as level as a desert and time is too heavy to handle.

As Milton inadvertently demonstrated, goodness is confining and limits God's sphere of action, turning him into a droning bore. Eve ate to break the monotony. Eve ate to enjoy the appetite it would give her. Without misbehavior and misfortune there would be no news. Some philosophers like to argue that "good" and "evil" are co-relative terms, and, like "long" and "short," are necessary to each other. To know the meaning of "evil," you must understand the meaning of "good," as Satan certainly does, since he is a fallen angel. I'm sure he wondered how perfection could survive change. Perfection is more immobile than a mountain. Or, if in motion, as continuous as a heavenly body or a looped tape. Nietzsche thought a grazing cow could be happy because it had no memory of the past or vision of the future, hence no regrets, no anxieties, no invidious comparisons—an eternal now was enough.

Without history, how would we remember the injuries done to us by the grandfathers of our enemies? There is no other way to hand down hate from one generation to another; prejudice is fed on the excrement from former days; the chronicle of their previous misdeeds is read aloud in the marketplace; catechisms are recited in the presence of sacred books. Maybe Miss Tidy was right. There was no last night.

In his brilliant novel *The Living End*, Stanley Elkin gave God the best possible reason for the mess and misery of His Creation: it makes a better story.

My father had a driving habit. Many do, I suspect. Such men simply like "to take a drive" the way some step outside now "to have a smoke." "What if everybody did?" is the question Kant suggested we put to ourselves. One can understand why philosophers are morally inconvenient. Which is worse: sickening people the way power plants and factories do, or polluting streams by hosing hogs? In any case, repeating the offense seems essential to the elevation of the cause. And the cause, to achieve evil, must be elevated. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, NOW PERFORMING IN THE CENTER RING! RACIAL CLEANSING AND THE CONFISCATORS! Evil cannot be a simple sideshow—the momentary ogle of a bearded lady or a lewd peek at some hermaphrodite's minuscule appliances. Evil is a limelight hog and wouldn't mind the hose.

Aristotle thought moral virtue was a habit. Certainly vice is. Think of rape and murder as a serial rather than a snapshot—six unrelated killings in a week versus four in a month with the same m.o. The American soldier who mistakenly shot Anton Webern can say oops, but not if he's done away with the entire Vienna Philharmonic. What onetime act can be called "evil," can reach that kind of high-pitched crime? A crucifixion? There have been many. Christ's? Yes, but He had to be crucified, He had to suffer, our sins required their goat, nor would we be in a position to be saved as He was, without a death for Him to rise from on a ladder of hallelujahs. The Resurrection was a proof, a promise, and a preview. All rise, here comes the judge. Had Pontius Pilate known the plot, perhaps we might admire him now for handing down a sentence so hard on the shepherd yet so humanely necessary for his flock.

If repetition is at least sometimes a significant factor, numbers—higher and higher totals—would seem to matter. A RECORD NUMBER OF CHEVROLETS WERE WRECKED THIS LABOR DAY WEEKEND. I have w
dered how many Jews had to di
fore their deaths qualified as a h
caust, in contrast, say, to just an
pogrom. How many Africans m
starve before the U.N. is moved
make a motion? Which fish w
that grew too mercurial? The st
that broke the camel's back
number—what? How much does
breakage depend on the camel? If
Iraqis kill one G.I. a day, how m
days will it be before we withdr
What a surprise withdrawal will
because, every day, our casual
were light. So was the straw.

It is apparently worse if the cri
committed against large numbers
not only intentional but organi
as if they were actually one
come. The Chevrolets were wre
higgledy-piggledy, Africans di
unexpected thirst and unplan
famine, but the Armenians were
chosen targets of the Turks.
German solution to the Jewish q
tion was a bureaucratic action:
fices were opened, agents hired,
pers signed, file cabinets filled.

The ancient Greeks did not t
ble themselves much about evil.
malfunctions of man and na
were—to a point—easily und
stood: there were many gods an
dogma. The gods lusted, quarre
were jealous of their prerogat
and possessive about their pow
Under cover of animals they r
young ladies or in a fume of fru
tion turned the recalcitrant
trees. During wars they chose s
and constantly interfered with
fulfillment of human intentio
bent flights of arrows, slowed sw
of swords. Sacrifices were expe
If the gods demanded the slaug
of daughters, this became inco
nient. It was nonetheless like pa
tithes. Evil itself was not an issue

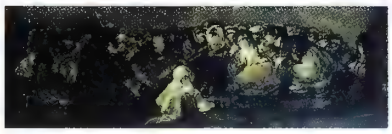
Bad luck could follow a family
way original sin semen'd its
through the womb of humanity,
by and large, quarrels were pers
you and the god of light or wi
wheat or war had your bones to
the way Prometheus' innards
repeatedly vultured, though
crime—the theft of fire from
hearth of the gods—was so se
that his punishment required re

ıd his liver grew back overnight a weed. When Prometheus suf-, he suffered alone; perhaps his ıer might be disturbed in her ), but not, certainly, the boy door or the grocer across town me Spartan and his young com-on. If, at creation, the work

heaven and there will be scores of saints on the earth. One of those angels, fallen from favor, is henceforth blamed for everything, since he possesses weapons of mass destruction and has moles and other minions everywhere that the ferrets of the Inquisition find it convenient to go.

men would follow the good if they knew what it was (and if they did not behave it was because their information, like the CIA's, was faulty). In the Judaic/Christian tradition the law was handed out, to my mind, like leftover cheese to a starving population. *What* it was,








t awry, it did so because the Real to mirror the Ideal and could be replicated in lowly sensuous erials without compromising its ty and falsifying its nature. Is rty really a torch-bearing lady? world, Plato said, is but reflec-and shadow.

vil, as something more than routine wickedness, appears when the pagan world is swept by the Judaic/Christian. In its e there is dogma with heresy as ffspring; law, consequently cen-zed authority and clerical bu-cracy; duty, thus an even fiercer ıarchy than there had been; over-lming authority, and the dicta-ıip of a deity who has triumphed other chiefs and other tribes, ban-ıg their gods in order to rule alone. ıough He (for it is a He in deed if in anatomy) is given powers be-d dreaming, He must nevertheless me family or saintly disguises in or-o get done all He must do, and in-es Himself in His creation (since now His) like a drawing done in draftsman's blood. Consequently, heism's presence is assured, and theism is only faintly obscured, use there are acres of Angels in

The realm of death is where the Titans once ruled, too deeply underground to be responsible for crops, and there the Prince of Darkness was sent, like a child to his room, for disobedience. The sun, the source of light and consequently understanding, blazed from above. The Form of the Good was the sun of the spiritual world, Plato said. Even earlier than he, light (knowledge) was identified with excellence, and darkness (ignorance) with evil. That is, ethical and epistemological concepts were fundamentally intertwined. This is the organizing premise of Susan Neiman's splendid history of modern philosophy, *Evil in Modern Thought*, though she gives a priority to the ethical chicken that I might reserve for the epistemological egg.

The Greeks were concerned with right and wrong, less so with law and obligation. Knowledge exercised its moral suasion from within, but when there is one God, and when, as always, that God has rules, disobedience is the source and substance of every sin. From the first, philosophers and theologians tended to differ about this, and do so to this day. With the optimism every tautology confers, Plato insisted that

was not nearly as important as *that* it was. Survival depended on unity, unity on regulation. Nourishment of whatever kind was the necessity. That there was a rule of law was more important than what the law was.

There is a day in every year when the hours of light precisely equal the hours of darkness, and the position of the sun on a sundial graphically represents the advance and retreat of its shine. These facts become characters in a moral story and soon enjoy the untrammeled dance of metaphor. The struggle between good and evil in the roles of day and night was continuous throughout the world because neither could be destroyed, only temporarily diluted or delayed. The seasons similarly warred with one another, each victorious, each beaten or making a comeback, arriving like the Marines or fleeing the scene. Manichaeism is an attractive theory if you want to simplify the problem of evil by making sense of it.

The triumph of monotheisms (odd there should be so many Almighties and no one able to put the others out of business) placed a considerable intellectual strain on

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hounds. "There is
almost nothing that has a name,"
complains, "that has not
been conquered among the Get-
tiles, in one place or another, a God,
or Divell . . ." In an effort to restore
purity, in waters irretrievably
contaminated, and order to thoughts ir-
recoverably muddled, they put poly-
theism back in motion, as I have
already suggested (God has a son and
that son a surrogate mother, St.
Christopher tells us; Hermes imps
hide in closets, dybbuks take posses-
sion of the innocent, and witches fly
through the skies).

Between a gloriously perfect God and the human soul, imprisoned in the dirt of life and its own body, intermediaries were deemed necessary, and countless numbers of them appeared immediately, if not before the need was seen. No ideology can exist without them. They literally keep it alive. Call them popes, prophets, mahdis, saints, bishops, mahatmas, lamas, rabbis, mullahs, merely clerics: they were as human as you and I, and as hungry—consequently as greedy; as fearful as you and I—and soon as cruel; as agile and inventive, as lusty and carelessly knockabout as you and I. They murdered their enemies and were murdered in turn, urged righteous war on infidel nations, and occasionally preached peace as if they believed in it. They pursued the evil in others the way some sought the deer and the fox, and scoured their religious institutions till they were cleansed of heresy. Like nations, leagues, and alliances, these institutions needed evil, the enemies who harbored it, and those who threatened them. Evil rarely feels so confident that it will risk appearing naked and without the tailless unhoofed look of the good. Never mind, the world was made better because some of its members were burned alive.

You don't need a theory to explain this. You only need history.

When [illegible] on the face it was that a [illegible] Western intellectual enterprise. It is 1755 and Lisbon has just been shaken by an earthquake, with much loss of life, property, and confidence. Moreover, the disaster [illegible] on the Day of the Dead, November 1, a calendar moment that would nowadays, like 9/11, be subject to many fanciful interpretations. Intellectuals sent twitters of pity to the ruined city, but to the side of their injured views they brought palliating judgments and soothing rationalizations. The air had been sweet with the optimism of Alexander Pope, and a light breeze bore Leibniz's phrase "this is the best of all possible worlds" to every attentive ear. Newton had banished chaos. "God said, 'Let Newton be!' and all was light." The argument for design had been triumphantly upheld. Every event served a noble purpose and revealed the hand of Divine Providence in all things. Indeed, the human hand was evidence enough. It was how cleverly it held its knife that was admired, not the thrust that lodged it in a victim's chest.

In response to the tragedy, Voltaire first wrote a poem, a copy of which he requested a friend pass on, along with another on natural law, to Jean d'Alembert, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Upon their receipt, Rousseau objected to the Lisbon poem because it appeared to be an attack on Providence and therefore upon God himself. He complained that by overemphasizing human wretchedness, Voltaire had caused us to be more conscious of that wretchedness. This presumably made us more miserable instead of more informed. Then, like a schoolmaster, Rousseau summed the problem in a single sentence: "If God exists, he is perfect; if he is perfect, he is wise, powerful and just; if he is wise and powerful, everything is for the best; if he is just and powerful my soul is immortal." This domino-arranged rhetoric made its fall-down easy for Voltaire. If the Lisbon earthquake was not for the best, then, according to Rousseau's reasoning, God did not exist. But, we might reply, as if philosophy were [illegible] that the quake was for the best [illegible] all. Didn't fires encourage cities [illegible] build in brick and stone? [illegible] compel them to improve their [illegible] tation systems? So who knew [illegible] good would come from a vigor[illegible] shaking up?

A poem was an insufficient [illegible] sponse to 20,000 deaths, so Vol[illegible] familiar with the satirical tradit[illegible] of Erasmus, Montesquieu, and Sw[illegible] as well as the pessimistic Pope of *Dunciad*, in the space of a few [illegible] wrote *Candide*—a better idea. T[illegible] absurd could only be answered w[illegible] ridicule. A few important facts [illegible] not escape Voltaire. The problem [illegible] evil was as much an invention of [illegible] human mind (and the emotions [illegible] often drove it into nonsense [illegible] contradiction) as it was the re[illegible] of human nature or its environme[illegible] It frequently took catastrophe [illegible] stir us into action. Superstitions [illegible] as well as buildings, dogmas [illegible] when all those people did. G[illegible] and evil were seen to be signific[illegible] ly intertwined. Good intentions [illegible] sometimes pave the road to hell, [illegible] malicious emotions and wicked [illegible] tutions often produced profit[illegible] politics; greed, useful inventi[illegible] and envy, many masterpieces.

The problem of evil comes in [illegible] ontological sizes. The first is fact[illegible] does it exist as a part of the hu[illegible] condition, and if it does, what i[illegible] nature? what are its causes? and [illegible] may we rid the world of th[illegible] Agents of evil are often identi[illegible] with evil itself, as the members o[illegible] Qaeda were, making evil easier t[illegible] move, as if punishing them woul[illegible] migate Enron or allow Serbs to [illegible] upright. The second is philosoph[illegible] how shall we define evil? is its [illegible] acter human, natural, or div[illegible] what is its justification? and w[illegible] does its presence indicate? (Ordi[illegible] things signify, evil "portends.")

Occasionally, an issue will [illegible] out its welcome and, without fu[illegible] argument, dwindle away. Events [illegible] the Lisbon earthquake or the H[illegible] caust may prompt intellectua[illegible] quiries, and their results, in t[illegible] may influence how we choos[illegible] cope with evil in the world; [illegible] many cosmic moral problems

y philosophical because they
he result of assumptions that
been embarrassed by facts or
to grief on the shoals of events.
wing the Final Solution, God's
gists had a lot of explaining to
lumanists were equally shame-
. A few threw up their hands.
't it futile to speak of morality
such a failure of morality? Nev-
less a thousand thumbs were
t into the dike. Excuses were re-
d like birthday balloons. The
rity of these rationalizations
nue to be theological and are
egarded with much seriousness
ofessional philosophers.

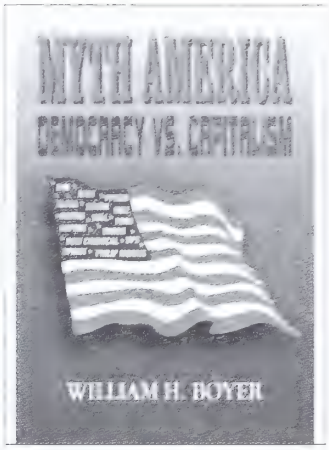
e history of philosophy can be
ly described as a series of pro-
solutions to specific intellectu-
zzles followed by evaluations
ejoinders that lead to new solu-
and fresh mysteries. That is: a
er finds himself in a fix, thinks
as found a way out, is told he
ailed dismally, valiantly, nar-
, utterly, tries to fix his fix only
ve more faults found, and so on;
while the kibitzers adopt one
on of the fix as their own and
to tinker with it. In this game
rve and volley, God has been
l upon to rescue many a system
disaster, a savior indeed for
iples that have been threatened
their own kind of extinction.

od certainly existed, at least as
parently viable hypothesis, at
ime Susan Neiman begins her
ry with the Voltaire-Rousseau
el, and she immediately exam-
Kant's reaction to Rousseau's
that the impulses in man that
led to the establishment of
pt and corrupting societies are
evil in themselves but could
been (and can be) used to cre-
cial relations that do not suffer
the mistakes that previously
been made. Rousseau suggests
if children were taught, by word
example, that life punished vice
rewarded virtue, they would be
to follow their basically good
lses with confidence instead of
dation. As it is, the virtuous are
nized, being more than usually
iseless. But Rousseau's view of
ry has insufficient scope, for the
are not handicapped, surely, if

it is the classical virtues they possess. Wisdom, courage, temperance, justice: these are traits not of the modest and humble but of the strong, assured, and forthright. Pagan virtues give their owners an edge, allowing them honesty, for instance, because the truth takes grit to give and guts to receive. In their lives, inordinate demands have not been made on attitudes or emotions such as "sympathy" and "love," nor has obedience become the center of their moral interests.

If you are a Kantian, and believe that virtue should be sought for its own sake (as Aristotle also did), then to wish, out of a sense of fairness, for a world where goodwill and good character might be rewarded rather than exploited would be a terrible mistake, because, in such circumstances, no one could say whether virtue or its profit had been pursued. Suppose there were a Divine Providence and that no leaf fell without its say-so; then, Kant argues, "all our morality would break down. In his every action, man would represent God to himself as a rewarder or avenger. This image would force itself involuntarily on his soul, and his hope for reward and fear of punishment would take the place of moral motives." I think, on this point, Kant underestimated our human capacity for self-deception and forgetfulness. Many people believe in Divine Providence and its Overseer, but when a tornado blows away the trailer park they lived in, they thank God for sparing them and congratulate themselves, neglecting to notice who the wolf was who sent the wind their way and flindered everything they treasured. We know that gambling is for losers, that unprotected sex is risky, that drinking and then driving at high speeds is murderous, but we do it all the same, and even congratulate those who escape the consequences; so I'm sure we'd be happy to call ourselves virtuous for investing in good deeds only because they paid public dividends. We want our happiness to be crowned with laurel leaves, as if we deserved our prosperity, our reputation, our salubrious ease. At best, we


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People are tired of excusing the deity from theological difficulties by maintaining that we cannot know God or His intentions, but they don't really believe what they say, since they continue to attribute to Him all sorts of enterprises. Prayer similarly assumes too much. That God has intentions of any kind assumes too much. That God cares assumes too much. That God exists in any form, or does not exist in any guise ... assumes too much. Most human worship is idolatrous: it is commercial, narcissistic, childish—"Watch me daddy while I somersault on the lawn," "Jesus is looking out for me," "God made my first million, and for that reason I have given it to the church; the remaining forty mil are mine." Instead: "Whereof one cannot speak, one should keep trap shut."

God was cleared of evildoing by denying His existence. It was His only excuse, Stendhal remarked, though a good one. However, when Nature was discovered to be indifferent, not just to our fate or to the fate of salmon, buffalo, or redwood forests but to life of any kind, to Nature's own reification even—indifferent to the indifference of its minerals, to the careless flow of its streams, to the fecundity of its own mothering nature—then Man became the prime suspect. The old argument from design, whose candidates for the intelligent cause were God, Nature, and Man—the latter two plainly set up to be lopped off—was turned as topsy-turvy as a lotto basket; since it now had to be acknowledged that Nature was not only the origin of all those dismaying "acts of God" insurance companies don't have to pony up for but it had allowed human societies of every stripe and character, of peculiar practices and dubious moral ideals (such as human sacrifice, public executions, racial cleansing, clitoridectomies, slavery, inquisitions, professional wrestling, scarification, and so on) to flourish the way the Aztecs and the Mayans or the Greeks and Romans did, as well as Islam managed at one time, or China during certain dynasties, the British Empire most recently, and even the American ego. Yet when these High Societies stumble, fall, or fade away, it pays no-never-mind. Hills and valleys do not weep for Adonais or for anybody else. Nature's built-in sanctions (Men are mortal) inhibit no one, including the intellectuals, who invent new immortalities to combat the death rate, because there is always a brisk market for solace and the honey of future rewards. Maybe it is the manufacture of myth and the promotion of superstition that is evil. I rather like that idea.

Neiman follows the argument like a sleuth, and, indeed, her book is a kind of thriller: What is it that menaces us? Will we find what evil is? And how may we escape it? The path leads from a God found absent past a Nature that's indifferent till it fetches up at the house of man himself: a castle made of rock, on a rugged mountain's top, its walls surrounded by a moat and defended by crenellated towers. For man to exist in harmony with nature had come to mean that he must eat his meat raw, behave with indifference to everyone but his buddies, be wholesomely rude and free of customary social restraints. "Spontaneous" and "instinctive" were momentarily admirable words. A popular Physical Culture movement aped Greek and Roman statuary. The Reich liked hikers. Gauguin said he spat when he heard the word "civilization" (I bet he didn't), and others said they drew their pistols (I bet they did).

By this time, however, love of a "native" life was hopelessly reactionary. Perhaps, perversely, evil wrapped itself in glorious animality—D. H. Lawrence's Nature Boy, Adolf Hitler's blue-eyed blond ones—now that heaven was empty and the earth cruelly unconcerned. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: "We're not in tune. Not like migratory birds./Outmoded, late, in haste, we force ourselves on winds/which let us down upon indifferent ponds." Without other devices, man surrounded himself with man. But was that a help? What, after all, were the moat and walls and towers for?... the readied molten oil?... the axes and the arrows? Not for fear of the bumblebee. Safe inside we died of damp, infected by our c wastes, impoverished by the expe and loneliness of self-defense. S inside we dozed while Judas ope the gate. When we woke to re we were no longer safe inside, murdered one another with a that could only be described as erdotal. Our own bodies flung own bodies to the dogs. We had been created in God's image bu that other guy's.

In the heyday of our reign, about Man were as prevalen those about God had been. wore our hubris like a festival The entire universe had been m for us. That's why the earth was center of the solar system. Am the creatures of that earth, we w its hilly arm, the tairest of them Man was the measure. Wasn't the ancient claim? So every hu being was of intrinsic worth, e with every other, and worth protection and praise, though didn't really believe a word of "worth and equality" cliché, s we were so callous about the we of our own species as to shock e other creature into kindness. not for long were we the glory the center. As Freud pointed the earth has been demoted, kind tossed among the others li dirty rag. Perhaps we had a r Perhaps we were stationed ahea the giant lizards who might re when we melted the polar ice, we certainly were listed bel cockroaches, who had already l longer than we and had be prospects; nor were we even ma of our fate but prey to drives a morseless—and desires as i tiable—as wharf rats.

Human beings have rarely g their own lives good grades. S penhauer, for instance, was a prefigured by the ancients. Only sistent thoughts of death, w most men have hated even m than life itself, made them l around. Neiman quotes Goethe all times and all countries th have been miserable. Men hav ways been in fear and trouble, have pained and tortured each o what little life they had, they m sour one to the other.... Thus l

t always was; thus it will always
n. That is the lot of man."

What has emerged for me from this wrestle of the human mind with its own nanity, as Neiman opens her fi- apter by returning to Lisbon's and the fascinating doctrinal it stimulated, is that whereas ound of evil is mere immorali- e cause of evil is evil itself. We that White bigotry produces bigotry, and Black bigotry ms White. I drive-by to shoot unt, you drive-by to shoot my . I drive-by to do in your papa, rive-by to do in my mama— ly merrily, life becomes ob- . This tit for tat forms a circle y named "vicious." But its be- ngs lie in a muddle of ordinary derstanding and commonplace rtune, in fatherly tyranny and erly meanness. To steal Han- Arendt's adjective, evil's begin- are usually banal: job losses status losses there, humilia- here, foreclosures there, new e moving in, ethnic irritations, in, lifetime disappointment. is nothing anyone does wrong ly, but living habits grate, val- lash, competitions occur that ot make for harmony and hap- s but rather encourage slander crimony. Put-upon people tend ub together, and "club" is the word. Their enemies, the s of their economic woes and uthors of intolerable blows to pride, belong to another club, n together by present prejudice ast subjugations of their own. , gangs, tribes, sects, cults, par- movements, blocs: collections ople who have given their loy- hearts and minds, as it's often o a group whose reason for be- complaint and whose aim is ss and vengeance. Resentment rsued like a hobby. The weak wait for their opportunity to ve justice through the inflic- of reciprocal pains. They wait empowered.

ustices (and fancied ones are added to the real) are cata- d and kept fresh for future use liticians who lie, bureaucrats who organize, preachers who rant, historians who colorize, and schoolteachers who read and repeat every calumny they can collect, preparing their children to carry on crime. *We* are the pure, the chosen, the faithful, the saved, they brag—the state, the church, the schools, and finally the nation bray—while *they* are the beshat, *they* are the damned, the sinners, idolaters, and agents of evil. Soon every citizen has been trained in fear and blame and hatred like soldiers for battle. We call this being a good patriot.

The sandhog wishes to hold his jackhammer, the computer geek his keyboard. Surely that is reasonable. Everyone takes his local miseries to the schools for instruction, to court for justice, church for benediction, history for justification of his historical blames and claims, the military for reassurance and saber rattle, the state for presumption, pride, and swagger; and there he receives indoctrination, bias, mythmaking, fabrication, bluster, and braggadocio. Evil, it seems to me, is a mosaic made of petty little pieces placed in malignant positions mostly by circumstance in company with the mediocrity of the bureaucratic mind, and empowered, of course, by a gunslinger's technology.

Susan Neiman suggests that Auschwitz was our Lisbon, though we have had a number of powerful before-and-after shocks: Passchendaele, the Soviet gulags, Hiroshima, Cambodia, Kosovo, Rwanda . . . a list too long for 9/11 to obscure, crimes greater than our monuments can justify. We are ingenious, however, and we try: (1) the Holocaust was a display of God's wrath at Europe's left-wing, atheist, assimilating Jews—an excuse as old as Eden; (2) the human race advances by means of suffering and catastrophe, the way we learn to fix bridges that fall down or prevent spaceships from exploding—but historical progress, even if painful, is now impossible to carry a torch for; (3) oh dear, God does work in mysterious ways, but this "event" was unique in its mystery and horror, so much so that it falls out of history altogether and has no real forerunners, as it will have no progeny, consequently only its survivors are competent to comment on it, otherwise silence and awe is all that's appropriate (Neiman slights this one, my favorite); (4) it was the largest and best organized pogrom in a long history of anti-Semitic persecutions, so apart from size there is no surprise; the Germans are demonically gifted, and this ritual of purification was German through and through; moreover, for most Germans, the killing was done at a distance and never became news, therefore it was as easy to ignore as the mass murderer next door—a move that gets the human race off the hook at the expense of only one nation; (5) the evil that was Auschwitz is not like next year's SUV, simply bigger and more dangerous, nor even a vehicle that runs on brand-new fuel, but an evil as novel as a new species, unique as #3 claims, and therefore naturally mind-boggling—here, the theory of emergent evolution is applied to dastardliness, keeping the holocaust historical; (6) since God is gone and nature excused, evil is simply a moral matter, and the question now is: just how much human behavior is so "natural" nothing can be done about it except, as against earthquakes, to build better. We are what we are and that's all we are, said Popeye the Sailor. And Michel Foucault agrees with Popeye, because he argues that the haves are permanently at war with the have-nots. Get used to it, he sternly tells us. It is no longer a matter of Manichaean good versus evil but a contest between those who have it and those who don't, until those who don't do and those who do don't, whereupon the combatants switch ends of the field and go at it again.

Certainly, human horrors are old hat. It is history's major burden, our principal trait. In these recent cases, the surprise is the size of the crimes, not just the sum of the victims but the zeal and numbers of those committing them. Still, it is business as usual down at the old abattoir and carnage yard. It's simply that business is now done at the global conglomerate level. In the near future we shall drone our enemies to death

between rounds of gamblers' golf or cowboy cookouts by the central

Neiman leads the reader through a careful analysis of the relation of intention, act, and consequence to kinds of useful knowledge and degrees of awareness. I give my son the keys to the car knowing he has a tendency to drive too fast, but I don't want him to drink, to speed, to hit another car, injure his girl, raise my insurance rates, bill me for repairs, contaminate the atmosphere, violate his curfew, or make his mother mad, though I know some of these things will happen and that others are likely. "Intention" as a concept is as slippery as an icy street. Moreover, degrees of awareness are mostly issued by poor schools: if I stick a finger in hot grease, I know I will be burned immediately; if I fail to visit the dentist in six months, maybe I shall pay for it, but later (on a payment plan the British call the "never never"). How many consequences am I responsible for when I loan the car or, obedient to orders given me, I sign a writ of execution? How far should I see through eyes my superiors will shade for me?

If Nature is morally indifferent (though not neutral exactly), and mankind is a species contained within Nature, then men can be indifferent, too. Or favor their own species, their own language, their own tribe, as Nature allows peonies their love of ants, or crows the flocks they fly in or the roadkill they flock to, or us, for that matter, the meat we eat, leaves we chew, or friends we make. We can call good what our pecking orders suggest, and each of us supports what supports our survival. Or not: everything that happens, including the "unnatural," is natural. Tautology tells us so.

But Nature, even from the moral point of view, is not a homogeneous entity. Actually, the word is a wastebasket and probably should never be used for anything other than collecting its ambiguities. There are profound differences between rocks and trees (as the Greeks already knew), between trees and birds, and birds and men, who are ultimately conscious creatures. As conscious creatures, we are aware of what it means to be neutral or indifferent or callous or uncaring or cruel and malevolent. Consciousness may seem transcendent to some, an impotent epiphenomenon to others, and a mistake to a few; but it is with this consciousness that we give meaning to a world that we should be grateful is as meaningless as an earth's shake, because otherwise its purposes would have to be deemed whimsical and malicious. It is consciousness that allows us to devise our works of art and discover nature's laws, but it is also consciousness where we harbor hate and allow our reason to be crowded into a servant's corner, our perceptions to be few and skewed, our sympathies buckled about us like a belt, our beliefs burdened to breaking by superstition.

A great portion of the human race is literally homeless; mass migration is one of the darkest marks of our age, with the hunger, disease, and suffering that attend such displacements. But all of us—even in the comforts of Palm Springs or Beacon Hill—are metaphysically homeless anyway. Consciousness, as Nietzsche observed, though our fundamental means of connection with the world, has cut us off from it, because we cannot live in the moment like an animal but rather dwell in anger at the past and anguish over our future. Home is supposed to spell ease, identity, love, and that wonderful Victorian invention, comfort. Which it can do and sometimes actually does. If one can afford it. Above all, it is our refuge from the world, where we seek protection from its heartless pains. But what a dreary illusion that is. Home is also where we commit murder, mayhem, and suicide, where we shake a crying child loose from its life, where we quarrel like squirrels toward eventual divorce, where we grow accustomed to tyranny and the utility of lies, where we cultivate ignorance and pass on bigotry like a chronic cough, where children get to disobey and disappoint their parents and parents to abandon them, where we find to what lengths "ought" has gone to escape "is," and where the tribe that we have allowed to define us claims its prize.

Evil is as man-made as the motorcar. I suspect that, like the motorcar, evil as a prevalent state of things suits a lot of people. If nature is uneven we can try to even it, but it is

we who have made a habit of p
tice, and we who must design th
stitutions that will discourage res
ment, malice, ill will, and ignora
while fostering justice, intellige
learning, and respect. The ques
is whether it is better to die
good life or from a bad one. If we
(and I wouldn't bet on our succ
there will be one satisfaction:
shall probably be eaten by our
greed, and live on only in our r
middens, and the fossil record.

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## WEEKLY REVIEW

"Serbs, having thrown off their dictator, were waiting, in the dark, for international aid to help them pay for electricity. California was running low on power again. Maine's wild Atlantic salmon was placed on the endangered species list, to the dismay of Maine's Atlantic salmon fishermen. Boston banned mercury thermometers, each of which contains .7 grams of the toxin, enough to contaminate a small lake. Russia decided to go ahead and crash the space station Mir into the Pacific ocean, disappointing Dennis Tito, an American businessman who had hoped to pay $20 million to visit the doomed station, and television executives, who were planning to film a "reality-based" television program there. China banned a gathering of poets. A robot successfully read the mind of a monkey."

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# LETTERS

Continued from page 8

act of so-called "international te-
rism" is completely omitted. W
223 words are erased without ell
or other editorial markings, it t
little effort to render a philosop
text logically inconsequential.

By presenting a glossy carica
of Derrida's literary style, *Har*
*Magazine* superficially dismissed
only Derrida's arguments but
broader scope of the book, whic
tempts to make philosophical s
of unprecedented historical trau

*Giovanna Borradori*
Associate Professor of Philosoph
Vassar College
New York City

## Goodbye to All That

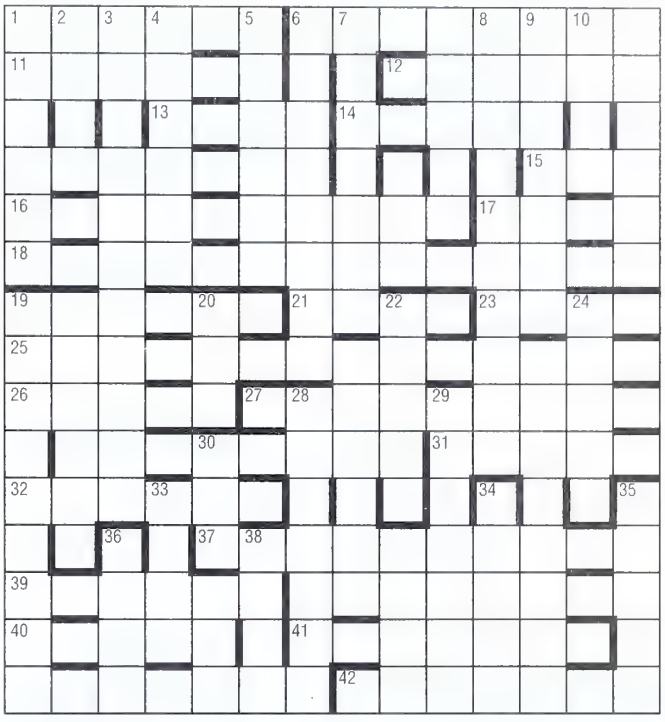
If Lewis Lapham ["The Go
Horde," Notebook, October 2003] v
to blame the nation's sordid pol
state of affairs and the "flight of m
ing from the American public sq
on the California "frame of mind
must acknowledge that the bulk
sistance against many of his pol
pet peeves, such as the redistricti
backe in Texas and the invasion o
emanate from his home state. He sh
also remember that the California
gressman who bankrolled the rec
from Cleveland, Ohio.

*Kevin Murray*
San Francisco

I was heartened that Lewis La
notes a greater willingness on th
of citizens to become politically
["Reading the Mail," Notebook
vember 2003] but dismayed t
"The Golden Horde" he does n
ognize the large number of cand
in the recent California guberna
recall election as evidence of s
phenomenon. Instead, Lapham
fully designates us the "chorus
dancing clowns," casting doubts
ability to recognize a genuine
zen's movement.

*Marc Valdez*
(Former) Candidate for Calif
Governor
Sacramento, Calif.

# PUZZLE



## Strip Mining

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

Fourteen diagram entries are unclued. Together they comprise 25 Across. Two unclued entries are of two words.

Clue answers include six capitalized words and one foreign word. 1 and 16 Across are not common. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 59.

ACROSS

1. Jerks up with yokels consuming nothing (6)
6. In southern state, has an uplifting experience—takes flight? (8)
11. Doctors are not overwrought (6)
12. Laid low by vow in humble dwelling (3,3)
13. Soft pad in back pack (4)
14. Financier loses million in specialized tissue (5)
15. I am Latin and it's everything! (3)
16. Gallant efforts from juvenile restrainer (10)
17. Various elements in hot water love to eat out (4)
18. Showing flexible thinking in addition? (14)
19. School covers up low neck (6)
21. Crooks like drinking a soda (4)
23. Noise made by top dog (4)
25. *(See instructions)* (7,7)
26. One who'll field bids or time a bid (5)
27. Continental sellout? Manufacturing an ape doll (9)
31. French oil? Inept, inept (5)
32. Cheese is put back in list (6)
37. Statements of principle can create senatorial alienators (10)
39. Spill the result of a very close election? (6)
40. English game—I dropped out of this match (5)
41. Costume feature in *Cleopatra*—I'm enthusiastic:...(7)
42. ...Could it win an Oscar for direction? (7)

DOWN

2. Tip off ultimate meaning of speech (4)
3. Popular European leader put down in rank—it's of no matter (11)
4. Corrupt act—face up to it or close your eyes (6)
5. Arab, Jew, or Palestinian—put 'em in place (6)
7. More offbeat mounting—sure, sure, that is right (7)
8. Papa's medal can produce a lump in the throat (5,5)
9. Cheer up—entertainment's built in here (7)
10. Upper-class oddball drops $100 raising African animal (4)
19. Car tested badly—went all over the place (9)
20. Crib-covering article not used (3)
22. Kind of digs party trick, being above it all (5)
24. Sounds like perceptive producer of big-eyed children (5)
28. Retold a fictional cover-up with some stretching (7)
29. Boycott bloomers (and the preceding answer), getting English horse-woman's address (7)
30. Pine for sounds in the country! (3)
33. Old ambulatory rodent with no tail (4)
34. Countenance the opening side (5)
35. Quaker-like author (5)
36. Tight—get your arms up (4)
38. Seafront houses do (4)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Strip Mining," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by January 12. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the March 2004 issue.



# FINDINGS

American scientists deliberately engineered a new, extra-deadly form of mousepox that kills all mice, even those that have been vaccinated, and much the same result has been accomplished with cowpox and rabbitpox. The new variety of rabbitpox is not contagious, however, which could add to its value as a terrorist weapon if the disease were ever to cross the species barrier, because its application could be narrowly targeted. Other researchers were trying to get permission from the World Health Organization to develop a new strain of smallpox that will infect monkeys. The Pentagon has funded a project to develop genetically engineered trees that will change color in the event of a biological- or chemical-weapons attack, and Chinese scientists have developed hybrid human-rabbit embryos. Population ecologists concluded that the famous boom-and-bust cycle in the lemming population is a result of predation, and a new study found that it is safe to give Zoloft, a common antidepressant, to children. Researchers at the University of Georgia said that trace amounts of antidepressants that enter the environment through human waste can cause developmental problems in fish and frogs. A ten-year-old boy found a two-headed snake in Kentucky. The Food and Drug Administration issued a preliminary conclusion that clones are safe to eat, and an American paleontologist found evidence that ancient hominids used toothpicks made of grass. A lightning bolt killed twenty pregnant cows in Florida.

Physicists in Romania recently created gaseous plasma blobs that grow, replicate themselves, and communicate, suggesting that life might emerge in unexpected circumstances. Scientists have discovered a one-celled creature, which they called Strain 121, that can survive temperatures up to 121 degrees centrigrade, the temperature used by medical sterilization equipment. Japan reported a new case of mad cow disease. Australian and American researchers were working with a robot, located in Perth, Australia, that is controlled by rat brain tissue in a petri dish in Atlanta. Archaeologists found evidence that Roman Britons wore socks with their sandals, and a leading zoologist declared not long ago that "homosexuals are at the pinnacle of human evolution." Scientists unveiled a rough draft of the poodle genome. The National Academy of Sciences, after studying thousands of papers on the subject, concluded that too many pets are overweight. A related study found that lesbians are more likely to get heart disease because they are generally heavier than other women. Italian babies, it was discovered, are the fattest in Europe.

Scientists found that chronic wasting disease, a cousin of mad cow disease, is much more contagious than was previously thought, and said that thousands of deer may have to be killed to prevent its spread. Two hundred chickens were beaten to death with a golf club near Brisbane, Australia. Poultry researchers found that domestic cockerels "allocate sperm differently according to the quality of copulation"; new mates tend to receive more sperm than familiar partners, and the roosters increase their sperm deposits in the presence of other males. Scientists have discovered the oldest known genitals, a very large penis on the fossil of a 400-million-year-old ancestor of the daddy longlegs. Danish scientists discovered that women who drink wine have an easier time getting pregnant. It was reported that an elevator to outer space was under development and could be working in about fifteen years. A meteorite injured five Indians near the Bay of Bengal. The National Park Service confirmed that the face of Mount Rushmore is moving, and astronomers speculated that Sagittarius A, the supermassive black hole at the center of the Milky Way, is spinning. Physicists created the coolest object in the universe. ■

*Findings is drawn from recent news reports and scientific journals.*

*Aspen, four color aquatints with burnishing representing the colors from an aspen tree during each of the four seasons, by Anne Appleby. Courtesy Crown Point Press.*




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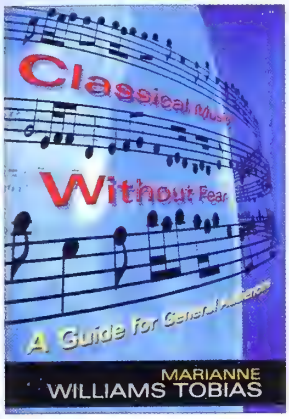
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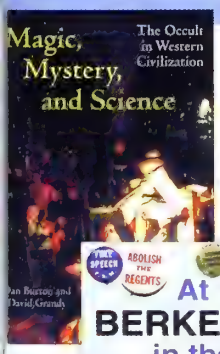
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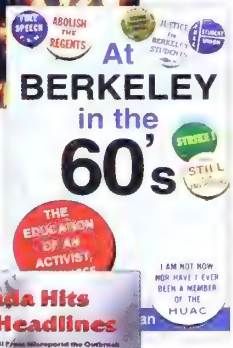

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Two refugee girls at risk of joining hundreds of thousands of child soldiers worldw
Photo: Peter Marlow/Mag

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Magnum Photos

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HARPER'S

# LETTERS

## The Revolution Will Be Televised

Thomas de Zengotita ["Turn On, Tune In," Proposal, November 2003] misses the essential point of the progressive talk radio and television project: we want to convince people that the liberal viewpoint and the Democratic Party are better for America than the Republican Party's conservative viewpoint. This requires a clearly articulated vision for the future, a consistent presentation of what is right and wrong with America today, an interpretation of American history that is positive, proud, and progressive; and a massive coordination effort behind the scenes, so that politicians, media spokespersons, and television personalities make the same points and emphasize the same issues when shaping the national debate.

Instead, Zengotita suggests that "we discuss Baudrillard in studies with Fredric Jameson but also with the directors of the Metro" and that the host should "take a call from someone who is on Excedrin PM

show." I don't think Rush Limbaugh could come up with a more scathing parody of how confused the liberal movement has become.

*Scott Anderson*
Bergenfield, N.J.

Thomas de Zengotita aptly, although with excessive sarcasm, summarizes Plato's "Noble Lie" as what "enlightened rulers tell the rabble to ensure that their enlightened policies—policies too elevated, too farseeing, for the rabble to comprehend—are nevertheless supported." But Bush's lies about Iraqi possession of WMD and ties to Al Qaeda, which mask what he "really had in mind" ("gaining control of the world's oil supply"), are not Noble Lies.

Earlier in the dialogue Socrates distinguishes between legitimate or "noble" verbal lies and those that are not. Legitimate lies either cure or prevent the execution of what Socrates calls a "true lie." Socrates' example of a legitimate lie is the kind we tell a friend who has given us weapons and asks for them back when he desires to kill his former philosophy professor in a fit of madness. Knowing that this would be an injustice, we tell him that the swords have been sent off to be sharpened in Sparta. Telling lies simply to get

hat one desires, as Bush has done, mply does not count.

*iene Fendt*
Jniversity of Nebraska
Kearney

Creating an elite group of neo-uppies with graduate degrees in phi-osophy seems to be Thomas de Zen-otita's strategy for sparking a mass novement. Of course, this has been he left's approach for the past fifty ears, and its tangible influence in olitics has been disappointing, to ay the least.

Michael Moore has been the nost successful critic of the corpo-ate oligarchy in the past decade, yet he does not merit a mention in Zengotita's essay. For Zengotita, an "Ivy League Grad School meets Ali G and Jiminy Glick" television host is ideal, but Moore does not need a college degree for credibili-ty. Funny, confrontational, and well-versed in facts, Moore is popu-lar with all segments of society. Rather than present a New York intellectual who pretends he's a homeboy, why not select someone like Moore, who actually goes out into the real world to engage the enemy on his own turf?

*Peter Morgan*
Toronto

If Thomas de Zengotita believes a "straight white man" is necessary for success in a progressive TV "Talk-Land"—since the host "needs to be an 'unmarked signifier,' who can build bridges between identity groups"—he is out of the loop.

The "straight white man" is per-ceived by many as the *most* marked signifier, and he increasingly bores the coveted "early thirties" demo-graphic, not to mention the poor and the disenfranchised. Zengotita and the progressives should "directly" challenge the current TV "political-opinion landscape" by changing the *face* of the voice for change.

*Ann M. Fine*
Tucson, Ariz.

Thomas de Zengotita writes that "you don't decide on a cast before you write the play; you write the play and then cast it." Although this may be true for some playwrights, there have always been those of us who recognize that writing for a particu-lar actor can focus the mind and, es-pecially if the actor is involved in the development process, can yield specificity and insight far beyond the writer's scope.

*Darren O'Donnell*
Toronto

Zengotita's proposal is solid, and the audience is out there. Where do I send my head shot and résumé?

*Martin Sweeney*
Venice, Calif.

## A Detrimental Education

John Taylor Gatto's essay ["Against School," September 2003] is a searing diatribe against a public school system bereft of intellectual promise and stim-ulation. But contrary to his assertion


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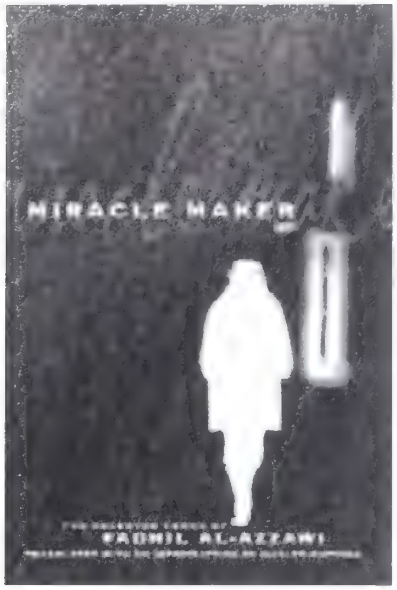
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flexively," there are countless teachers political, and economic justice. Teachers in Portland, for instance, have transamine and question the mores, values, and assumptions of American culture and to think independently.

*Mike Hanley*
Portland, Oreg.

Unlike John Taylor Gatto, I do not see the justification for, or probable benefits of, eliminating public education. Gatto's position, like the right's reliance on standardized testing, is grounded in politics rather than pedagogy and is most energetically advanced by those who despise not just public schools but all public institutions. The marketplace, which would likely inherit the task of educating our children if Gatto got his way, is (to put it gently) unlikely to honor the ideals that inform his critique.

*Alfie Kohn*
Belmont, Mass.

Despite the failings enumerated by John Taylor Gatto, public education still represents our nation's greatest hope for economic and social equity and truly democratic government. Rather than simply malign public schools and teachers, Gatto should encourage a universal effort to guarantee that all students take on "serious material . . . in history, literature, philosophy, music, art, economics, [and] theology." Nowhere else but in our public schools will that vision be realized.

*Buzz Bartlett*
Council for Basic Education
Washington, D.C.

John Taylor Gatto includes Joseph Conrad among the unschooled or "underschooled" great figures in American literature, industry, and politics when, in fact, Conrad, born Jozef Korzeniowski to Polish parents in then-occupied Poland, attended school [illegible] before joining the French merchant marine at seventeen. And surely he must have benefited greatly from his formal schooling when studying in later years for master's certificate with the British merchant marine, where knowledge of advanced mathematics was essential for celestial navigation.

*Lisa Michel*
New Bern, N.C.

## Sign of Life?

It is somewhat mystifying that *Harper's Magazine* chose to publish a document some Church of Scientology parishioners elect to sign to ensure that they will never be subjected to psychiatric "treatment" and so that they will receive spiritual assistance in times of emotional turmoil ["Stayin' Alive," Readings, November 2003]. Revulsion to electroshock, chemical restraint, lobotomy, and other manifestations of psychiatric barbarism is hardly confined to Scientologists. Legions of informed people worldwide recognize and reject the false solutions and destructive practices the psychiatric industry endorses in the name of science.

Furthermore, the editors misconstrued matters of public record in the Reading's introduction. The facts about Lisa McPherson's death were clearly established more than three years ago when a Florida State medical examiner, after consultation with numerous experts, determined that her death resulted from a blood clot owing to trauma likely incurred in a traffic accident before she arrived at the church's retreat. A judicial finding made more than two years ago established that McPherson desired to be helped in a manner consistent with her religious beliefs, and that she had been assisted twenty-four hours a day by church members who also ensured that she ingested food and drink daily.

The false statements made in *Harper's Magazine* insult the religious workers who did what they knew would help McPherson's spiritual and mental condition.

*William T. Drescher*
Calabasas, Calif.

*The editors respond:*

On December 6, 1995, Florida

ate medical examiner Joan Wood gned an autopsy report for Lisa cPherson that designated her cause death a "thrombo-embolism . . . ie to bed rest and severe dehydra- on." On February 16, 2000, three ears after McPherson's family essed criminal charges against the hurch of Scientology, Wood re- oved "bed rest and severe dehydra- on" as the causes of the embolism om the report, replacing them with traumatic hemorrhage to the left opliteal area"—a space behind the nee joint.

In June 1, 2000, testimony about he changes, Wood admitted that lthough she had added a traffic ac- ident that had occurred seventeen lays before McPherson's admission o the Fort Harrison Hotel (the hurch's Clearwater, Florida, head- uarters) as a factor relating to McPherson's death, she had done o only because "it was that event which set about the chain of fac- ors," and that "clearly, absolutely, he car accident had nothing what- oever to do with the fact that Lisa McPherson developed a pulmonary embolus." When questioned about her reason for removing dehydra- tion as a cause of the embolism, Wood stated, "I do think that she was dehydrated and that she was in a coma for a period of time," and that her opinion "as to the severity of dehydration that existed or the degree of incapacitation or length of incapacitation" had not changed "in a significant fashion." Wood conceded that she had considered "changing [the report] back," and had also considered ruling the death a homicide.

The Church of Scientology has never accepted moral responsibility for Lisa McPherson's death. The or- ganization's stonewalling delayed the police investigation, and its liti- gation tactics have kept the McPherson family's wrongful-death lawsuit from going to trial. The Sci- entology release form is just further proof that the church has no inten- tion of changing its behavior.

*David S. Touretzky*
Pittsburgh

## Swan's Way

In his review of Gabriel García Márquez's *Living to Tell the Tale* [New Books, December 2003], John Leonard is mostly right when he writes that "wring the neck of the swan" means "just the facts, please." The quotation is actually a literal translation of "*Tuércele el cuello al cisne*," the title and first verse of a poem by the Mexican writer Enrique González Martínez, and it is more than simply an admonishment to avoid "lyrical flourishes."

Martínez wrote the poem in 1910 as a reaction to the modernist aesthetics of the great Nicaraguan poet Ruben Darío, who at the time sought unblemished beauty in the guise of the swan, his emblem of perfection. Challenging Darío's aesthetic Martínez invokes the owl ("*el sapiente buho*"), who is wise in the ways of looking beneath surfaces and whose questing eyes alight upon the invisible truths of the spirit.

Márquez exalts both swan and owl in his fiction, capturing the persistent inner life agitating within the real *and* the imaginary. If it were not for the owl's disquiet, we would not be enchanted by the dreamy swans that enliven Márquez's stories and novels.

*Harriet Turner*
University of Nebraska
Lincoln

## Silken Dalliance

It is not surprising that as a young man, Richard Selzer ["The Spinsters of Eld," Readings, December 2003] was perplexed by his teacher's statement that "with time and patience, the mulberry leaf becomes satin."

Mulberry leaves are the sustenance of silkworms.

*William C. Waterhouse*
State College, Pa.

## Correction

The location of the Manjaca detention camp in Banja Luka was misidentified in the January folio, "War Crime and Punishment." Banja Luka is in Bosnia, not Croatia. We regret the error.

From the author of *The Pencil*

**Henry Petroski**

**SMALL THINGS CONSIDERED**

**Why There is No Perfect Design**

GOOD DESIGN: People have found numerous uses for this nameless "thingy" designed to keep the top of the pizza delivery box from sticking to the cheese



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–Jessica Helfand, L.A. TIMES

**SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN points out "the pleasure of seeing Petroski's playful mind at work."**

–Michael M. Sokal

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in which Petroski considers the designs of drinking cups, toothbrushes, duct tape, light switches, Teflon, drink-holders in cars, ...& items so humble [they] are merely designated as 'thingies.'"

–Tom Tucker,
CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

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–Harry Levins,
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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# NOTEBOOK

## Bad medicine

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.*

—Henry David Thoreau

Forty years ago I was not yet thirty, and my father still held to the hope that I would come to my senses, abandon the practice of journalism, and follow a career in one of the Wall Street money trades. As a young man during the Great Depression he had labored briefly as a city-room reporter for William Randolph Hearst's *San Francisco Examiner*, and he knew that the game was poorly paid and usually rigged, more often than not a matter of converting specious rumor into dubious fact. Having escaped the sorrows of Grub Street and gone east to become an eminently respectable New York banker, also the director of Fortune 500 companies and a member of long-established clubs, he understood the principle on which the society arranges its socioeconomic seating plan, and for his son he wished a place on the dais, preferably with a view of both the mountains and the sea.

The lesson was not one that my father knew how to teach in words of his own choosing—possibly because he believed, and couldn't avoid saying, that even the most successful journalists sit well below the salt—and so he made a point of introducing me to various captains of industry and finance in whose lives and works I might discover the happy result of a properly schooled ambition. Over a period of three or four years in the middle 1960s I found myself in golf foursomes with oil-company presidents, at lunch or dinner with the senior partner of an investment bank, present in a box at Yankee Stadium with the managing director of a trust, a real estate and a pension fund. None of the instruction led to the desired consequence, but among all the fond reflections on fortunes won or lost, I remember best the cautionary tale told by Theodore Weicker while walking on a beach at East Hampton.

A man then in his late sixties, as rich and well-groomed as he was wise in the ways of the world, Weicker had inherited, together with his brother, the controlling interest in the Squibb pharmaceutical company, and shortly after the Second World War, divining the possibilities implicit in what subsequently has come to be known as "globalization," he traveled to the poorer countries of the earth to set up factories producing drugs for the local pharmacies and hospitals. He learned early in the proceedings that it was better to deal with dictators than with democracies. Doing business in a democracy necessitates the bribing of too many people, most of them more than once. "Nobody stays bought," he said. "When anything goes wrong, somebody to whom you just paid $10,000 stands up in whatever they call a congress in those places and makes a speech about American exploitation."

The Shah of Iran appreciated the difficulties, and by way of illustration, Weicker told the story of the Iranian health minister who objected, "on humanitarian grounds, no less," to a widening of the profit margin on the manufacture of aspirin. For some years Squibb and the Iranian government each had been content with markups of 100 percent over cost, but then it occurred to the government to rub Aladdin's lamp for another 100 percent. The health minister refused to approve the request, and for a period of several months nothing could be done. The chances for negotiation improved when the health minister checked into a hospital for a routine appendectomy. As soon as he had been settled on the operating table, the nurses informed him that the hospital had exhausted its supplies of anesthetic. The surgeon apologized for the inconvenience while holding a scalpel to the minister's shaved and trembling belly, explaining further that the pain of incision would be so great as to deliver the minister into a state of shock, which, although momentarily unpleasant, would serve as a kind of anesthetic. The minister consented to the rise in price.

Weicker delighted in the elegant simplicity of the transaction. No lawyers, no environmental-impact statement, no waiting around for a report from the ethics committee. The true nature of the free market revealed with a clarity and precision seldom attained by the professors of economics at Harvard or Yale. "There you have it," he said. "What business is all about. Building a better world."

The cautionary and uplifting tale came to mind in early December last year when President Bush signed the amendment to the Medicare legislation that delivers 40 million elderly and disabled American citizens into the custody of the good-hands people operating the nation's insurance and pharmaceutical factories. The new authorization purports to reduce the cost of prescription drugs for every needful American, and the White House staff dressed up the photo op in Washington's Constitution Hall to look like a scene of

tuful thanksgiving—a vast throng of well wishers, military band music, a bright blue banner emblazoned with the physician's comforting "Rx," grateful invalids and smiling congresswomen, President Bush in the part of a merry Santa Claus bestowing upon the multitude the gifts of Christmas yet-to-come. Hats off gentlemen, send for the champagne. Great, good news; bread upon the waters; pennies raining from heaven and stars falling on Alabama.

Looked at a little more closely, the scene acquired a somewhat different character and tone. Still celebratory and festive, of course, but the rejoicing of bandits and thieves as opposed to the thankfulness of survivors rescued from a shipwreck. It was hard not to think of Eskimos contemplating the bonanza of a beached whale, the faces in the crowd those of K Street lobbyists eager to congratulate the politicians (chief among them J. Dennis Hastert, speaker of the House of Representatives, and Dr. Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader) who had worked so long and hard to unblock the river of government money now free to water the plains of avarice. It was the genius of Hastert that had formulated the legislation in 681 pages of stupefying prose (and strong-armed the rules of parliamentary procedure in the House to secure the winning vote at 6:00 A.M. on November 22), and it was the calm and morally anesthetized composure of Frist that in the Senate on November 25 had placed the scalpel of extortion against the shaved and naked flesh of the American body politic.

Few or none of the politicians who voted either for or against the bill took the trouble to read it; like them, I rely for my understanding of it on what I've seen in the newspapers and what I've been told by informed medical practitioners, but I think it safe to assume that the particulars speak to Weicker's ideal of free-market perfection. The principal author of the legislation, Thomas A. Scully, set about the task of writing it in June of last year, while he was employed as the federal administrator of Medicare. At the same time he expressed the wish to enter the private sector, putting his services up for auction to five high-priced Washington influence brokers representing the insurance companies, the drug manufacturers, and the health-maintenance corporations. Right day-after-the-happiness in Constitution Hall, Scully resigned his government post to await bids for his tour guide's knowledge of the small print that allots as little money as possible to individual citizens and as much money as possible to the vested commercial interests.

Although the government must provide drugs to 40 million people, it may not negotiate a bulk discount; it must pay whatever price the manufacturer sets or asks—prices that in the recent past have been rising at a rate of 12 percent a year. The legislation forbids the importing of less expensive drugs from Canada, prohibits beneficiaries from buying supplemental insurance for drugs unacknowledged by Medicare, reduces or eliminates payments to as many as 6 million people for whom Medicaid now defrays at least some of their prescription costs, declares a suspension of payment at precisely the point when most people might need the most help. An annual premium of $420 covers 75 percent of drug expenditures up to $2,250; from that point upward the beneficiary must pay, with his or her own money, 100 percent of the next $3,600 in costs; once the expenditures reach a total of $5,850, the government pays 95 percent of the subsequent bill. The actuarial tables assume that relatively few people can afford (or will live long enough) to pay the toll on the bridge across the river of public money flowing out of Washington into the privately owned catch basins of the medical-industrial complex. As a further means of implementing the shift of the nation's healthcare burden from the public to the private sector, the legislation offers various inducements to the life-enhancing profit motive:

A. A $12 billion slush fund from which, over the next ten years, the secretary of health and human services may pay out bribes to HMOs otherwise reluctant to accept patients whose illnesses cannot be prepped for a quick and certain gain.

B. A windfall of $70 billion, also to be provided over the next ten years, to those corporations willing to continue prescription-drug coverage for their retired employees, the money to be paid in the form of both tax deductions and tax-free subsidies.

C. The guarantee of "maximum flexibility" to the private entities seeking to recruit customers from the general population now served by Medicare. The private entity may exercise the right to "cherry pick"—i.e., to offer its services only to those individuals not likely to require expensive treatment. The government must provide for everybody else, for the hopelessly enfeebled and the terminally indigent.

D. The legislation's reliance on the drug companies and the private insurers to curtail spending and control costs. The provision serves a dual purpose. It assures the eventual destruction of the entire Medicare apparatus, and it relieves the government of any responsibility for what will be reported as an act of God. Even the dimmest of Republican congressmen knows that the government doesn't have the $400 billion that the drug-prescription benefit presumably will cost over the next ten years—doesn't have the cash on hand or anywhere in anybody's budget projection. The money must be borrowed, at rates of interest yet to be determined. In the meantime, while waiting upon possibly unhappy financial events (wars, revenue shortfalls, stock-market downturns, sustained recession, etc.) the government retains no control of the fees charged by the health plans or the prices that the pharmaceutical companies demand for drugs. Let Mother Nature take her course, and the expenditure estimated at $400 billion easily could become an invoice presented for $1 trillion.

Among all the cheats and false suppositions written into the legislation, the assumption that private entities somehow might be induced to restrain spending should have been the easiest one to ferret out, if by nobody else than by Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader. The good doctor knows, probably better than any of his colleagues in the Senate and certainly as well as Ted Weicker's exemplary surgeon in long-ago Teheran, how to inflate a drug cost, supply an unnecessary medical procedure, pad a hospital bill. In 1968, Frist's father and elder brother estab-

shed the Hospital Corporation of merica (HCA), which has since ecome the nation's largest consor- um of for-profit hospitals and med- al centers—252 of them in twenty- hree states. For several decades the ompany required each of its hospi- als to return a profit of 20 percent a ear and to "upcode" their patients y exaggerating the degree and everity of their illnesses in order to eceive, from Medicare, more gener- us reimbursements for the delivery f imaginary goods and services. So killed did the hospitals become in he arts of medical chicane that in December 2000 HCA admitted to a lefrauding of the federal government o massive that it required the pay- ment of fines in the amount of $840 million. Two years later, confronted vith a supplementary set of similar harges, the company negotiated a ettlement for an additional $631 million. The agreement was reached n December 18, 2002, two days be- ore Frist was elected Senate majori- y leader.

Another cautionary tale, but not ne supportive of the hope that the ost of the prescription-drug benefit vill be contained by the people dis- ensing it. The corporate health-care ystems that currently hold captive 60 million Americans (in return for n annual ransom of $952 billion) an't afford the luxury of a conscience r a heart. They're set up to make mon- y, not to care for sick people, and even if the managers sometimes might vish it otherwise, how then would they ay themselves life-enhancing salaries, nd what might happen to their faith n the free market? Before investing n private health-care organizations, he Wall Street financial analysts like o see a low "medical-loss ratio" (i.e., hat percentage of the yearly revenues ctually allotted to patient care) suffi- ient to offset the administrative costs 9.5 percent in the private sector as pposed to 1.4 percent in the public ector) as well as fund the annual com- ensations awarded to the chief exec- tives—an average of $15.1 million n 2002 at the country's eleven leading ealth-care companies. Even in the est of circumstances the miracle of he free market is never easy to main- ain, but over the last few years healthy numbers have become more difficult to find, and if not to their friends in the Congress and the White House to whom else does a good American turn for a little help with the building of a better world?

Two days after the House of Representatives passed the legislation by a vote of 220 to 215, Speaker Hastert's spokesman named the reward expected in return for so handsome an act of friendship. "This is the thing," he said, "[Hastert] thinks will keep us in the majority for a while." Not forever, not after the legislation takes effect in 2006, but at least until next November's elections, for as long as the specious promise can be promoted as an authentic fact and before too many people open their Christmas presents to find nothing in the box except a card wishing them a happy New Year and hoping that they get well soon.

Proud of its plundering of the American commonwealth on behalf of its corporate sponsors and political accomplices, the Bush Administration follows a practice well established by both its near and distant predecessors. The raids on the federal treasury encouraged by the Reagan Administration took place under the cover of a darkness represented as ideological enlightenment. Deregulation was the watchword for the transfer of wealth from the public to the private sector, the $500 billion savings-and-loan swindle an exemplary proof of what could be done with the theory that big government (by definition wasteful and incompetent) deserved to be sold for scrap to the entrepreneurs in our midst (by definition innovative and efficient) who know how to privatize the profits while socializing the risk and the cost. Wonderful news, said the *Wall Street Journal*, pennies falling from heaven and stars on Alabama, more swill for the pigs. Diligently applied by a succession of industrious thieves over the last twenty-five years, the theory has resulted in the wreckage of the deregulated airlines, the degradation of the environment, the monopolies strangling the wit and sense out of the news media, the Enron debacle, most recently the Halliburton company's theft of $61 million (configured as a 100 percent markup on the price of gasoline) from the American army in Iraq.

The looting is traditional, the rule of capture as firmly rooted in the country's history as the belief in angels. Emblazoned with the mottos "Boom and Bust," "Settle and Sell," "Get In, Get Rich, Get Out," the winning of the nineteenth-century American West was a public-works project paid for with federal subsidy. By 1850 everybody traveling west of the Mississippi understood that the country was ripe with four primary resources—land, minerals, timber, and the government contract—and that of these, by far the richest was the government contract. The trick was to know the right people in Washington, at the state capitol, and at the county courthouse. When the two sections of the transcontinental railroad were joined with a golden spike in May of 1869 at Promontory Point, Utah, the patriotic ceremony in the desert (band music, red, white, and blue bunting, hats in the air) glossed over the swindling mechanics of the prototypical government cost overrun. The work was so shabby that much of it had to be replaced within a year, the railroad setting up dummy corporations that rigged the prices of reconstruction, and the bipartisan majority in Congress content to sell its ethical interest for a percentage of the gross.

The Medicare drug benefit fits the job description understood not only by the treasury officials in the Grant Administration but also by the ambulance drivers who picked up Andy Warhol on the summer day in 1968 when he was shot twice in the stomach by a deranged movie actress. The drivers found Warhol on a dingy street in SoHo, and on the way to the hospital, not recognizing him as a celebrity and thinking him as worthless as everything else in a neighborhood not yet trendy, they didn't feel compelled to hurry. Warhol noticed that the ambulance was stopping for red lights and mumbled something about the urgency of his wound. The drivers looked at him as carefully as an HMO accountant looks at the pre-authorization request for a mammogram or a crutch. "For fifteen bucks," one of them said, "we'll turn on the siren." ■



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# HARPER'S INDEX

Amount earmarked by the House last December to create an indoor rain forest in Iowa : $50,000,000

Percentage by which Dick Gephardt's $460,000 overexpenditure exceeded the limits for Iowa's nomination caucus in 1988 : 60

Ratio of 2004 Bush campaign donations from Merrill Lynch employees to those from Bechtel employees : 60:1

Percentage margin by which a Milosevic-supported candidate won Serbia's presidential election last November : 12

Percentage by which that election's turnout fell short of the threshold Serbia requires for lawful elections : 11

Rank of Rwanda among countries with the largest proportion of women in their lower legislative house : 1

Rank of the death rate for women in childbirth in Afghanistan's Badakhshan region among the highest ever recorded : 1

Number of girls under age six in India for every boy : 0.93

Percentage of Japanese and Italian men, respectively, who rate their kisses a 9 or a 10 : 14, 72

Minimum price a Russian company charges to provide an alibi for an adulterer's absence : $34

Price a British company charges for its Purring Kitty software, which converts a mobile phone into a "discreet massager" : $2.65

Percentage of Chinese exports to the U.S. accounted for by merchandise sold at Wal-Mart : 10

Number of factory jobs that China has lost since 1995 : 25,000,000

Estimated percentage of the 2.9 million U.S. jobs lost since March 2001 that have not reappeared abroad : 83

Percentage of Mexicans who had a "bad" or "very bad" opinion of the United States in 2000 and 2003, respectively : 22, 58

Rank of Costa Rica and the United States among countries whose citizens live longest : 18, 19

Rank of the U.S. health-care system among the most efficient in the world, according to the World Health Organization : 37

Estimated value of Senate majority leader Bill Frist's household's stake in HCA, his family's hospital chain : $26,000,000

Months before Bush signed the Medicare bill in December that the *New York Times* last mentioned Frist's holdings : 4

Amount Bill Gates has pledged to fight malaria through 2008, expressed as a percentage of USAID spending since 1998 : 86

Percentage change between 2001 and 2002 in Saudi Arabia's PR spending in the United States : +1,700

Ratio of the number of bias crimes against Jews to those against Muslims reported in the U.S. in 2002 : 6:1

Ratio of suicide bomb attacks carried out by Palestinians to those carried out by Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers since 1987 : 3:4

Pounds of gear carried by a U.S. Special Operations soldier in Iraq : 135

Percentage of this accounted for by disposable batteries : 26

Calories of fuel energy used by U.S. farms in 1940 per calorie of food produced : 0.4

Calories of fuel energy used in 1974 per calorie of food produced : 1 (see page 42)

Number of times a Hummer H2 could be driven around the world on the excess calories Americans consume each year : 244

Percentage increase since 1999 in U.S. households in which there was hunger due to poverty during the year : 22

Percentage by which health-care spending by an obese American exceeds that by an American of normal weight : 36

Percentage by which health-care spending by a daily smoker exceeds that by a nonsmoker : 21

Number of a Texas toddler's burned fingers amputated in 1992 after she was left in a car with her mother's lit cigarette : 9.5

Settlement Philip Morris paid the girl's family last May : $2,000,000

Percentage of lawsuits decided last year under the Americans with Disabilities Act that were won by employers : 94.5

Number of disabled Californians whose home aid Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger plans to eliminate : 65,000

Average number of years before reaching the White House that a twentieth-century U.S. president won his first elected post : 14

Percentage points by which Ronald Reagan's approval rating changed in 1983 : +17

Percentage points by which George W. Bush's rating changed last year : 0

Percentage of the vote in last November's New Haven, Connecticut, mayoral race won by the Guilty Party candidate : 15

Roll of the dice with which a Utah mayor won reelection after a tied vote last November : 4, 1

*Figures are the latest available as of December 2003. Sources are listed on page 86.*
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AN AMERICAN ALBUM

# HARPER'S MAGAZINE

1850 - 2000

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– *Newsday*

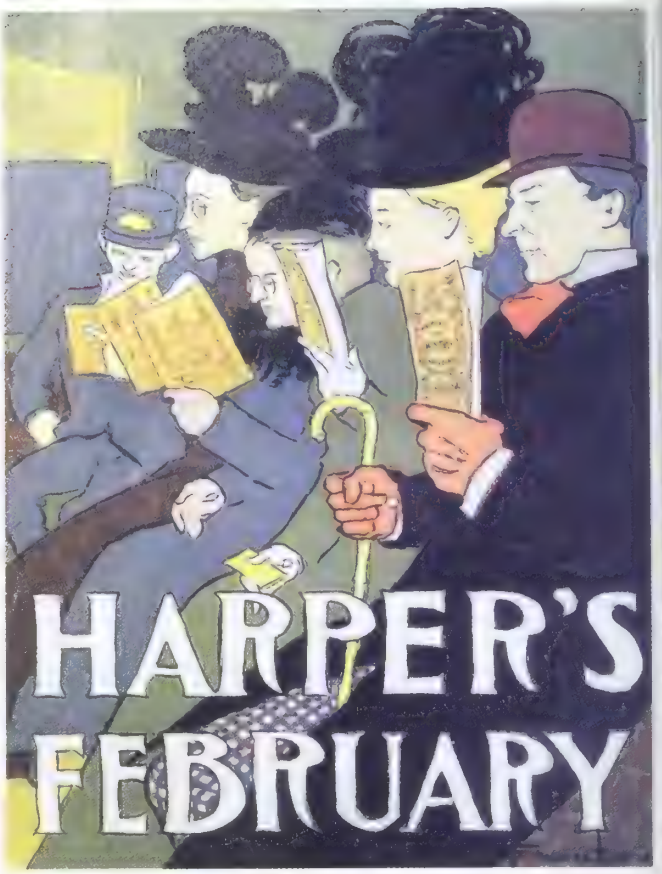
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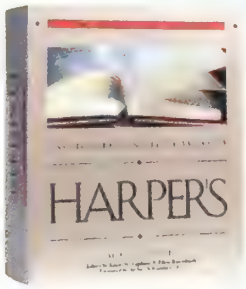
The Table of Contents is stunning in its range: Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Eudora Welty, John Cheever, Philip Roth, John Updike, Norman Mailer, David Mamet, Annie Dillard, and Tom Wolfe–and scores of other writers and artists who have made an indelible impression on America's literary history.

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*Edward Penfield's "February" poster, created to promote the February 1895 issue of* Harper's Magazine. *Penfield (1866-1925) was one of America's most highly influential illustrators and poster artists, widely credited with bringing abstraction to commercial art through boldly simplified shapes. An eight-page full color portfolio of his promotional posters for* Harper's *is featured in An American Album.*

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# READINGS

[Partita]

## ORCHESTRATING WAR

*From "Music at 6: Scoring the News, Then and Now," by Carter Burwell, in the inaugural issue of* Esopus, *published last October. Burwell has composed scores for more than fifty films, including* Adaptation, Being John Malkovich, *and all of the Coen brothers' work.*

It is 1914, and the unmistakable cadence of military drums and a fanfare of brass announce the arrival of the war news. On a screen embellished with gold, the machinery of war goes about its timeless business, the drama of each moment driven home by rhythms and melodies familiar from previous reports. This is the news of the First World War, courtesy of the Pathe Gazette biweekly newsreel.

The live music for the newsreel varied from theater to theater—sometimes a solo pianist, sometimes an organist playing a Fotoplayer Style 50, a 21-foot-long music machine capable of simulating everything from a 20-piece band to a pistol shot, horses' hooves, and crackling flames. In big-city movie palaces, the newsreels might be accompanied by symphony orchestras of up to 80 players. The actual notes varied as well, since the distributors didn't provide scores, and each theater's musical director had to find popular songs or classical music appropriate to each news story.

To ease this burden, publishers offered digests of music categorized by dramatic need, such as the *Sam Fox Moving Picture Music, Volume 1* (1913, composed by J. S. Zamecnik, a student of Dvořák's). As the newsreel played, the musicians could simply turn to page 11 for "War" music (*Sam Fox* offers three kinds) or page 17 for "Hurry" music (four varieties).

* * *

The town crier is an obvious early example of the use of music in news broadcasting. His handbell served both to gather an audience and to focus its attention, and I suppose the difference in tone and ringing pattern between the famous bell of Antonio Pucci and that of any other fourteenth-century crier served what we might now call a "branding" function.

Written news was often the basis for the town crier's announcements, and its market value was established in Venice in the sixteenth century when the government sponsored readings of *avvisi* for the general public, price of admission one *gazeta*. (Hence the word "gazette.") It's a good bet that the news reflected well on the Venetian republic and somewhat less well on its enemies, the Turks.

* * *

In the 1930s newsreels became "talkies" and began to include prerecorded music, putting many pianists and organists out of work but creating jobs for composers who could write music for the films. When the newsreel industry finally died in the late fifties, many of its foot soldiers joined the camp of its killer, television.

Like radio, television was subject to more government regulation than film—the assumption [illegible] source (the electromagnetic spectrum), they have an obligation to the public. As early as 1941 both the Federal Communications Commission and the National Association of Broadcasters [illegible] television possessed [illegible] result, there was much less music in television [illegible]

The first nightly newscast was that of Douglas [illegible] in 1945, but most stations thought news unattractive to their audiences. It was only in 1963 that CBS and then NBC sensed enough interest to expand the newscast from fifteen to thirty minutes, and President Kennedy's assassination that year established the role of network news as a place of common comfort, as well as information, for the country.

If music was present at all, it was only before and after the newscast, and it served the same branding function as theme songs did on serials and sitcoms. Because Americans' televisions remained on even when they weren't watching, music once again served to gather the audience.

The sixties brought a growing sense of civic responsibility among journalists who were discovering that much of the government's information about the Vietnam War was false. By 1968, CBS News was airing special reports like "The Vietcong" and "Hanoi," which are startling to watch today. There is no music anywhere in these pieces, and since the footage was largely shot without sound, there is a pervasive sense of quiet and, at least to someone listening in 2004, what must be called seriousness.

> Conventional practice has made an anchor of background music, such that it dictates what the viewers' response to the images ought to be. Remove it from a scene whose emotional content is not explicit and you risk confronting the audience with an image they might fail to interpret.
>
> —Claudia Gorbman, from *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*

Poststructuralist literary theory holds that the meaning of the written word is diffuse, forever contingent on a web of constantly shifting contexts. How much more so for a filmed image? And how much more still for music?

Lalo Schifrin may have scored the tarring of a dusty road in *Cool Hand Luke*, but that didn't prevent ABC from appropriating the music to announce its evening news. To the folks at ABC, the piece wasn't about work gangs or the failure to communicate; it was about breathless urgency. But there's no way to know what it meant to the audience.

As it happens, the *Cool Hand Luke* theme par[illegible] unintentionally, I'm sure—of the number one cliché in news music: the rhythm of the teletype. Although this cliché is kept alive by news organizations around the globe, most composers make a conscious effort to get as far away from it as possible. The teletype rhythm does have one advantage over music: much less semantic baggage—it's not in a major or a minor key, and it has no melody that would color the broadcast. As we entered the age of branding, however, it also had one shortcoming: it could not be copyrighted. It is the simple sound of a machine doing its job.

> News is serious and electric guitars are sporty, and in spite of the fact that Fox News has been doing a lot more sporty rock things, and some, particularly cable, networks have tried to introduce more contemporary sounds, brass is the sound of the important news.
>
> —Cynthia Daniels, engineer at Score Productions, which has been responsible for most of ABC's news music as well as the original CNN music package

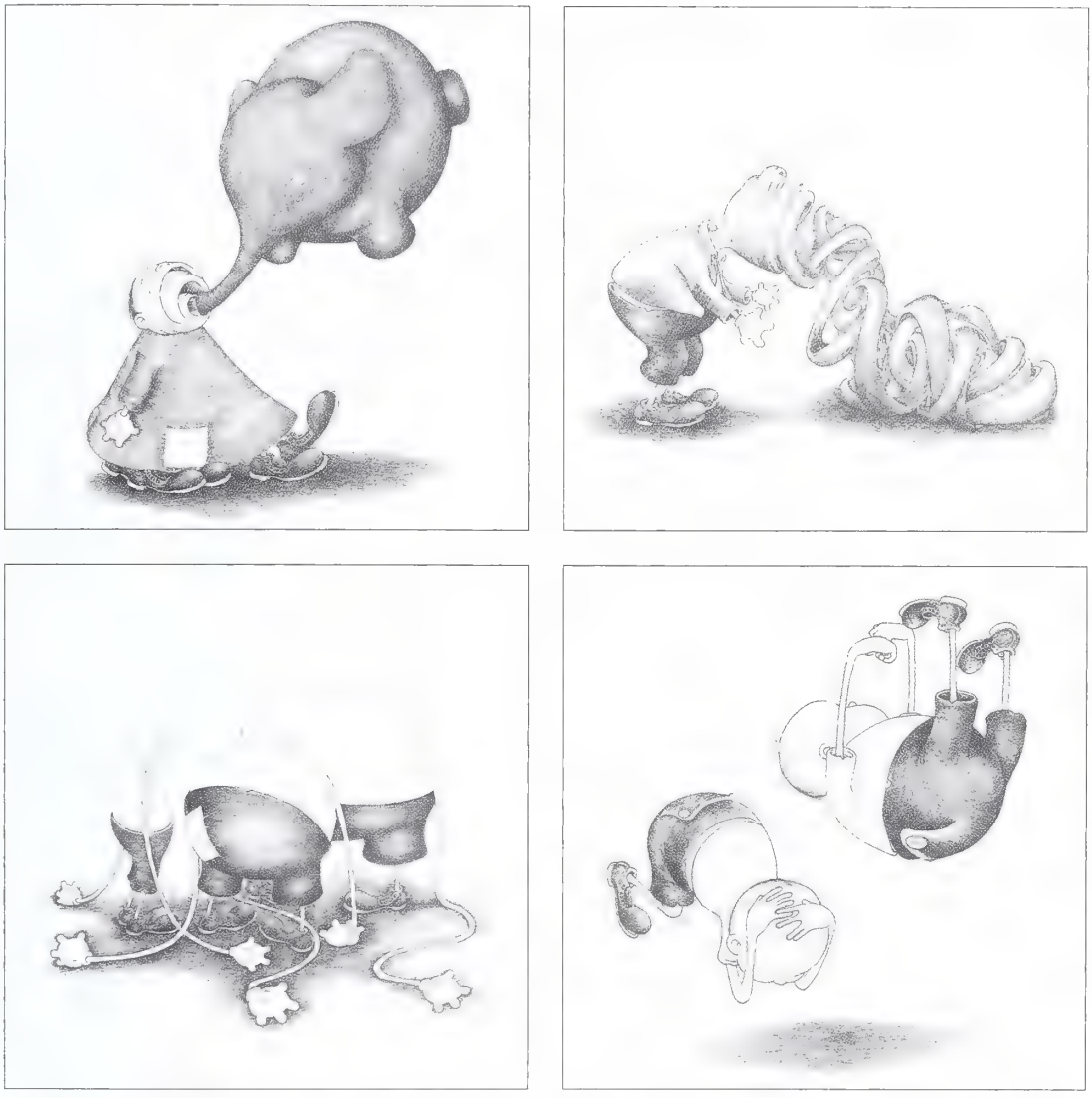
The two loudest instrument groups in the Western orchestra are brass and drums, so it should come as no surprise that they have served for centuries as long-distance communication devices, not only in the West but all around the world. Before metals could be worked to form brass instruments, animal horns were used for the same purpose—conch shells in the Pacific, the shofar in the Middle East, ox horns in medieval Europe. By the ninth century horns were associated in Europe with the military and the nobility, an association that is still with us today. Brass and drums compose the second cliché of news music, and we haven't gotten far from it since the first newsreels.

> If you go into countries where this is not in the culture, it is still ingrained in them. When we do CNN Español the last thing they want is Latin music. They want Aaron Copland. And we give it to them.
>
> —Gary Anderson, composer and executive vice president of Score Productions

* * *

War reporting is an ancient tradition of journalism, and it represents the crux of many of journalism's challenges. Wars always generate propaganda, and journalists are usually keen to distinguish their work—providing information—from propaganda. At the same time, war is traditionally a sport in which you cheer for the home team, regardless of the facts. Whether your side is right or wrong, you'd still rather not have your family or friends killed in battle.

Thus there is a thin line between German newscasts from the thirties and Leni Riefenstahl's



*Four untitled drawings by Jeff Ladouceur from his book* Ebola, *published by L'Oie de Cravan in 2002. Ladouceur's work will be on display next May at ZieherSmith, in New York City.*

*Triumph of the Will*, or between American newscasts from the forties and Frank Capra's *Why We Fight*. The differences are more in form than in content—the propaganda films bring all the art of master filmmakers to bear on the finished product, while news programs simply don't have the talent, time, or resources to produce the news so well.

> We did music for a special on the hunt for Osama bin Laden, finished the music at around 7:15, messengered it over to ABC here in New York, and at eight o'clock watched it on the television set.
>
> —Gary Anderson

Technological advances in the second half of the twentieth century have allowed shooting, editing, and scoring to happen many times faster than before. Writing, however, has not kept up, and many reporters from the age of film, when it took at least a day to process and transport the footage of the Vietnam War, bemoan the speed with which live or almost live video can make it onto the air without any vetting or interpretation by a journalist.

* * *

In 1985, NBC erected a milestone in the use of music for news when it hired John Williams, who wrote scores for the Lucas and Spielberg films, to write a set of themes for NBC News. The package of orchestral music he created was called "The Mission," and the network is still mining it almost twenty years

[illegible]

## RATED GEE

*[illegible] "What are two interesting things did you learn from seeing these films?" in a survey by the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. [illegible] screened 241 children's films from forty countries.*

Don't be afraid to help sharks. —*A.F., ten*
Because when he turned his self into a chicken the two chicken. —*C.T.*
That people in other worlds have more problems then we do. —*L.H., ten*
I learned that you should never take a former evil king on a long desert hike. —*A.S., eleven*
Never play that game. —*K.S., ten*
How to fight about toilets. —*L.M., ten*
To talk swiedish. —*N.B., eight*
Life. —*R.H., eight*
I learned that it was sad and that you had to go to someplace and get stuff. —*L.L., ten*
Do not marry someone that you don't know. —*K.B., nine*
We found out what our dog does when we're away. —*M.B., five*
Penguins have troubles too. —*S.H., ten*
You don't have to waste money on a tape recorder when you can study. —*T.Z., twelve*
How cars look and not to take other people's things. —*K.S., eleven*
That tha peple graf ther nose. —*E.M., eleven*
Dear Vittum Theater, I hope I win, I never won anything. Pick me. —*A.L., eight*
The money. —*V.M., twelve*
Dogs can dig really fast in sand. —*Anonymous*
People were getting in the secret organization. —*S.H., seven*
When she became big and small how could she walk in the city. —*A.A., ten*
If you keep twisting in the bag you get lawn. —*A., eight*
If you lose [illegible] dog you will get mad. —*A.G., ten*
No matter how clean they seem grandpa's got your back. —*M.R., ten*

[illegible] experience, and a much more diverse palette of moods and emotions, than any [illegible] before—and probably since. It must have been a very expensive proposition to commission someone like Williams, and the effect it had, at least on composers, was to make television news, and by extension its music, seem like serious business, worthy of respect.

> [illegible] they always go for that John Williams big grand music, but our music is always pretty aggressive. I feel the sound of Fox News Channel has branded us more than the look has. It's rock influenced, for sure. We try to keep the sound and look younger and hipper than what our competition is.
>
> —Richard O'Brien, vice president and creative director for Fox News

* * *

News music is delivered in the form of a "package," consisting of many, sometimes more than 100, different "cues," short pieces that present the thematic material with a certain feel, duration, and purpose. A feel might be "funky" or "somber"; durations are typically between ten and thirty seconds; and purposes include a "teaser" to announce an upcoming show or an "open" to start it. Four feels each performed for four durations and for four purposes would generate sixty-four cues.

All the networks commission exclusive packages from composers such as Peter Fish (CBS) or Michael Karp (NBC), or from companies that represent teams of composers, such as Score Productions (ABC), but generic packages known as "libraries" can be licensed by anyone who can do without proprietary themes, and there is much of this in local news.

> The package for the Gulf War was maybe fourteen or sixteen cuts, because basically there's tragedy and there's blood-and-guts. But if you do something for *The Early Show* you have to do tragedy, blood-and-guts, sports, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Election Day, and what I call "dead Pope music," for when the Pope finally dies.
>
> Peter Fish, composer for *CBS Evening News*, *Face the Nation*, and CBS Iraq war coverage

And so we come to the American coverage of the war in Iraq. It's important to note that there was a great divide between the tone of the coverage here and elsewhere in the world. In a striking return to the melodramatic traditions of the newsreel, American television invested every piece of war news, down to the titles and graphics, with an overwhelming amount of emotional context. Special music packages for the war were commissioned by

each of the broadcast and cable networks. Who made these calls, and how was the assignment described to the composers?

> On the Iraq war, the direction was: "Serious but not down, somber, or morbid. Serious but uplifting." They also veered away from "military" or "martial." Again and again the words are "serious," "powerful," "uplifting."
>
> —Gary Anderson

> The creative brief in the first Gulf War had more to do with the conflict of cultures and ideologies—it was the Islamic or Arabic East versus the West, and so the conflict was set in those tones. The second time it was more like they were trying to promote the war the same way they would promote *Terminator 3*—it was like "Battle of the Megaheroes." So the first time what I delivered was vaguely militaristic and vaguely Arabic simultaneously. And the second time it was just Techno-Ali vs. Frazier-IV, we're-going-to-knock-the-crap-out-of-them music.
>
> —Peter Fish

Even if we agree that it's impossible to write music that is nothing but "serious and uplifting," it is hard to avoid the impression that much of the music for the Iraq war strove to make one feel good about the war. This is particularly true for CBS and Fox, which invoked contemporary rhythm tracks to give an undeniable air of excitement to the proceedings. Clearly the networks had come to the conclusion that this was what the public wanted.

Although the music packages that were developed for the war included solemn pieces with deliberate tempos, those were not typically used. Of course, if the opening phase of the war had not gone well for the United States, we probably would have heard them. It goes without saying that no war goes well for everyone, and people were dying on both sides, but this rarely became the focus of the coverage or set the mood of the music. NBC even found a way to suck all the musical and emotional depth out of John Williams's "The Mission" by simply looping the opening measure of drums, creating a vapid bit of martial vamping.

As John Leonard noted after the first Gulf War, the American public wanted to "feel good about itself—it hadn't for a while." Is it the responsibility of the news media to make us feel good about ourselves? Inevitably the current system of using advertising to pay for news, and pricing that advertising according to audience size, results in a competition to attract viewers. But advertisers are not driven by audience size alone. When CBS presented prime-time specials on the first Gulf War they got better ratings than the shows they had replaced. Still, CBS canceled them because they couldn't sell the ad time. Advertisers were afraid their products might end up following a shot of dead bodies.

We want to feel good about ourselves, the advertisers want us to feel good about their products, the producers want the advertisers to feel good about their news shows, the state wants the producers to feel good about its government. Someone has to compose the music for all this good feeling.

Leonard comes to the conclusion that "media should stand in a quasi-adversarial relationship to the government because the government lies to us." In my opinion this skirts the issue. The media should stand in a quasi-adversarial relationship to us, the viewers, because we lie to ourselves.

[Miscellany]

# ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA

*From entries in the* 2003 Danville Community Encyclopedia, *transcribed by Anna Callahan from interviews with seventy-eight residents of Danville, Illinois. Contributors were asked to share knowledge on a topic of their own choosing.*

AMERICA, PERSONALITY

I checked the diagnostic criteria in DSM-4, and I think that if you could say a country had a personality, the American personality would fit the criteria for narcissistic personality disorder. I think, in retrospect, the classic illustration of that was the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984. Half the world didn't come. The East Germans weren't there, the Russians weren't there, the Czechs weren't there. However, the Americans went running around waving their flag and saying, "We're number one. We've got Olympic gold. We're wonderful." When you watch the Olympics on Canadian television, you watch the Olympics with a focus on Canadian competitors. When you watch the Olympics on American television, you're watching the United States at the Olympics and you don't see performances by great athletes if they're not American. Now, that's a sharp difference between the narcissistic personality disorder of the United States and a more balanced but somewhat smug and hypocritical personality that you might call Canadian.

BARBERSHOP

Well, there's four parts in barbershop harmony. There's the lead. Then below the lead there's a bass. Right above the top one or right above the lead is what they call a baritone, and

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

China. If China's—what is that word—economy fails, ours would automatically fail. Because we, we lean on them for everything basically. If you look at anything you buy, it's mostly China. So I feel if China's economy collapses, ours is gonna collapse with it. We talked about this in class. This is what I believe, the main reason why he wants to go and fight Iraq is basically for control of China or Japan, one of the two. I can't remember which one right now.

GENDER

My teacher's not sexist or nothing but he thinks males are better than females because he'll tell you. He feels that, in masculine things, we're—we can lift heavy things. And you never seen a female as president and stuff. And we get into the argument in class 'cause I told him my opinion that males are afraid of females, because there'd be an uproar if a female became president because she'd probably know what to do more than these male presidents nowadays. I mean the president we got now. I think his wife could do a better job. I think a female can hold up more stress than a male can. I consider America like a family when tragic things happen. And as a female she'd probably be able to handle it better than the male. 'Cause the first thing they're gonna want to do is—let's go fight! So I mean, man, they're just! I don't know. I been thinking lately—I think I am sexist. Because I do! I think males are stupid. They are and they're illiterate. And they do some stupid things.

GOD

One thing Christianity has left out is that God's ultimate responsibility, so to speak, is himself. God does everything for his own glory. He does everything for the sake of his own name. Take a husband and wife, for example. The husband does things for the wife and is good for the wife and everything. And in doing so that makes him look like a good husband. If the husband went off and cheated on her all the time, he wouldn't get glory as a good husband. It's the same with God. So in God choosing man, it's not up to man whether we're saved or not, it's up to God. Because if man chose God, then man would have something to boast about in his salvation, like look what I did. I chose God, therefore I'm a good person. But God says he won't share his glory with any other.

KNOWLEDGE

Everything that you encounter in your life, every experience, believe me you are going to be able draw off of it. I used to sit around these old, old guys on this tree. They had a tree they called the Tree of Knowledge, and they had benches there. They sit around them and I would listen. My friends would ask me, "Why you sitting around with those old heads?" And I used to always tell them, "I am getting schooled. I am learning."

MILITARY, OCCUPATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Just the fact that it would be totally preposterous to suppose that the Japanese military would build a base in Utah and we would have foreign troops on our soil, and yet we have troops stationed in Germany and England and France and Italy and South America. After the occupation of Japan, we just kind of left our troops there. The same with our different posts in Europe, es-

[Intercession]

## T.G.I.F., AMEN

*The following prayers were distributed by the Industrial Christian Fellowship, a "cross-church Christian think-tank" based in Croydon, England. The Fellowship claims that "surveys have revealed that accountants, those in manufacturing, banking, and commerce, stockbrokers, and fund managers . . . are seldom mentioned in church prayers," and they issued eleven liturgies in an attempt to remedy that gap.*

Father God, we ask your blessing on our economic world: Bless those in governments and banks, especially in poorer countries. Give them an understanding of economic forces and the mechanics of wealth creation; that they may produce laws and regulations which give freedom for people to create wealth.

We commend for your blessing and guidance those coping with redundancy. We pray for our managers.

We pray for the unemployed, the overworked, for those who work in the mass media.

Let us pray for people whose work necessitates unsocial hours, long commuting journeys, and frequent moving of house.

We pray for those with no sense of purpose or vocation. We pray for all Career Advisers.

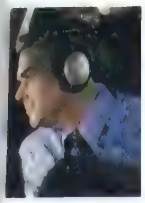
We pray for those who have become ill through stress. Give, Lord, your healing power to those hurt at work and guide the Health and Safety Inspector in his/her investigation.

We pray for those thinking about changing their jobs, especially those unhappy or insecure at work, those feeling unvalued or unfulfilled, and those who can't wait for 5 P.M. Friday.

Amen.

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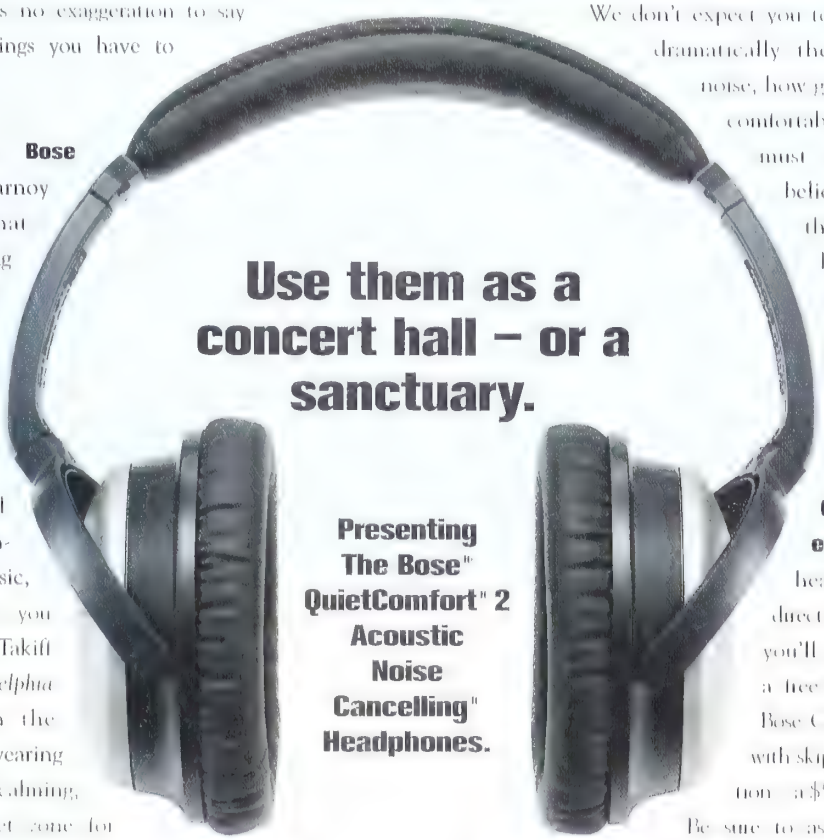
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*"Prison, San Quentin, CA," by Stephen Tourlentes. His work is currently on display at the Revolution Gallery, in Detroit.*

man behind him. I don't recall who the man to my front was, and I was the rear security man, so there was no one for me to pass it on to. It was standard practice for the Tiger Force to kill everything that moved when we went out on an operation.

FROM THE STATEMENT OF JAMES R. BARNETT, 27 NOVEMBER 1974

Since my last statement on 27 April '73, I got to thinking about a lot of things that happened in RVN [Republic of North Vietnam]. Most of those incidents could be classified as war crimes today. I feel that a lot of this stuff could have been prevented by [Sgt. Harold] Trout or Hawkins, but those two actually condoned such practices and at times encouraged them. The reason I want to bring this to light now is mainly that I and others followed orders given by Trout to shoot people when it was not necessary. We carried out those orders, and if I or some of the others that were involved were still in the Army today we would be subject to be tried for committing war crimes.

*Would you now relate one of those incidents?*

Sometime during the latter part of 1967 we had information that either a high-ranking Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army officer lived in our area of operations. Somehow we pinpointed the hooch where this VC or NVA was living, and for about four days my element, which was led by Trout, set up ambushes in the vicinity of that hooch, and several times we, including myself, went to this hooch and asked his wife where he was, but she never cooperated with us. I think it was the fourth day when we went to his hooch and he came running out and managed to get away from us. We fired after him but didn't hit him, and that was the last time we saw him. Trout got real mad about this and told us to burn the hooch down. We got the woman out of the house, and she had a baby, which was about six months old. Also somehow an old woman came into the picture, and I don't know where she came from. We then set the hooch on fire and totally destroyed it by burning it to the ground. While the house was burning the wife became hysterical, and a medic we had with us gave her a bunch of pills or capsules to take, which quieted her down. Our entire element then moved out from there with the two women and the baby, and we went about 200 to 300 meters and stopped at another hooch. Myself, Trout, and three others then took the two women and the child inside. Trout told me to tell my

team to chow down, and then I saw that Trout and the woman went down into the bunker inside the building. After about five minutes or a little longer Trout appeared from the hooch by himself and mentioned something to the effect that "this was pretty good stuff." In other words he was insinuating that he had screwed her. After another couple of hours Trout came out of the hooch again and told me that I was going to have to kill that woman. I didn't say anything to him at the time, and Trout went around to the rest of the element and told them to saddle up. Then he came back and said to wait until the element was moving out and then shoot her. I asked Trout at this point if he was sure that this is what he wanted to do, and he replied, "Grease her." The term "greasing" was one of Trout's favorite expressions. I got myself ready to go, and then the element started moving out. I don't know how the woman came out of the building, but she was standing in front of the hooch when I saw her. I took my M-16 rifle and pointed it at her and then shot her in the chest. She fell over and I turned around and saw that Trout was behind me and had seen the whole thing. We left her lying there and joined the rest of the element.

*Why did you shoot that woman, Mr. Barnett?*

Because I was told by Trout to do it and I carried out what he told me.

*Did you have to carry out this order?*

I felt at the time I had to do it, because I was told to do it. Today I know better.

I didn't have any idea what an unlawful order was while I was in RVN with the Tiger Force or that I could refuse such an order and not get into any trouble over it.

*How did you feel when you shot that woman?*

I didn't feel right about it, but I thought I was doing my job when I did it. After I shot her I caught up with the rest of the element, and I never gave it another thought. It was to me like any other day in Vietnam.

*Would you describe that woman you shot?*

She was about twenty-two or twenty-three years old, medium build, and I think she had short hair or she had her hair rolled up. She had a pretty good-looking body and looked better than the average women we encountered in the field.

*What were Trout's reasons for having her shot?*

I really don't know.

*How did you and Trout get along?*

We got along most of the time. I don't have anything against Trout personally, but he did tell us a lot of times to do things which were not right. All I want out of this is for the Army to realize that the influence and leadership of a character like Trout can lead to a lot of wrongdoing. I feel strongly about that.

FROM THE STATEMENT OF MICHAEL J. ALLUMS, 17 JANUARY 1974

*Mr. Allums, it has been alleged that a member of the Tiger Force murdered a Vietnamese infant by cutting its throat, in November '67. Do you have any knowledge of this incident?*

Yes. I did not witness the actual thing, but Ybarra told me about the incident. He told me that he had killed the child, and he had a band that he said he took from the child. He was rather proud of the incident and gloated about it. Ybarra kept the metal band and wore it, and I think he was wearing it the last time I saw him.

*Did you believe Ybarra when he told you that he had killed the child?*

Yes, for sure. I saw him during the same period cut an ear off a male body. Ybarra got down on his knees and, using a straight razor, he started cutting the ear off. I turned my head, and when he was finished his hands were covered with blood and he had the ear. He put the ear in a bag or something; later I saw some ears he had in a jar.

*Did you ever observe Ybarra in possession of a ration bag containing a string of human ears and human gold teeth?*

Yes, I saw it at least once, maybe more times. He had quite a few ears in the bag, and he kept a handful of gold teeth in a cloth bag. I remember Ybarra saying that the teeth had been kicked from bodies and that he was either going to take them or mail them home and melt them down.

*Did you ever hear any radio transmissions regarding the disposition of prisoners?*

Yes, during this same period of time, I heard a radio transmission from battalion. They had been asked what to do with the prisoner we had. The reply that came back was something like, take care of them like you would a horse with a broken leg, or words to that effect. Green was told to take care of the prisoner. Green made a big deal about it, letting the prisoner know that he was going to be killed. The prisoner was tied down and gagged. Green actually tortured him with a knife, jabbing him in the throat, cutting it a little at a time, finally cutting his throat and killing him. I cannot say specifically who witnessed this besides myself, but there were quite a few people around.

*Were any of the incidents reported, to your knowledge?*

I doubt it, as the officers, both company and battalion, actually seemed to condone the acts. We, Tiger Force, were told by the officers that when we went into an area anything moving, man, woman, or child, was to be killed, as they were not supposed to be there. We were constantly being told how good we were, how our body count was always the highest and what a good job we were doing.

# I NEVER

raphy, *edited by Jerald Milanich and William* *the following ques-* *ing of the nineteenth century,* *hat is known about their culture has* *nstructed using documents such as the* *ofessionario. Professors and students at the* *College of William and Mary are currently pr*

Have you believed that when the blue jay or another bird sings and the body is trembling that it is a signal that people are coming or that something important is about to happen?

When some woman has given birth, have you avoided coming near the fire, have you considered this sinning?

In the clearing or field of maize, when lightning strikes them, have you considered it a sin to eat it or advised that no one else eats it, considering it a sin?

Have you prayed to the new moon? In what way or with which herb did you do this?

When the fireplace fire pops, have you said this is a sign of war?

Is my mouth trembling a sign that something bad is going to come to me, that they are saying something about me, or that there is going to be food?

Belching, have you said that this is a sign that I want to die, or that there will be much food?

Anointing the head with bear grease, have you considered it a sin [illegible] a certain number of months?

Have you eaten [illegible] tery, or fleas, or lice?

Your husband having left you, did you bathe with certain herbs, [illegible] will return to you?

And thus perfuming, have you put on the dress skirt?

Have you fasted with this intention, that someone will take a liking to you?

And thus with someone [illegible] night, and in order to [illegible] make the ceremony?

[illegible] someone?

[illegible]

Did you kiss someone?

[illegible] that you would not become pregnant?

Being pregnant, have you killed the unborn child or wished to kill it by taking some drink or striking yourself or squeezing your belly to [illegible]

Have you had intercourse with father and son?

Has someone that has had your younger sister had a duet with you?

By chance, have you had intercourse as if you were a man?

Are you a doctor? Did you cure someone badly so that he would call you back and give you some more pay?

In order that they pay more, have you said: if you don't give me something, the sickness that you have will return?

Have you cured anyone with the ceremony of adulation?

Not because of work, but because you are angry, have you ordered that someone be punished by having his arm broken?

Have you taken an herb to run faster than the other in order to take the bet or the prize that they put up?

Have you taken a woman out of her house by singing your charms? Did the spell work?

Because they don't come to dance, have you ordered that some woman be affronted or that the penalty be taken to her?

Thundering, have you blown toward the heavens in order to stop the clouds or water with your evil prayers?

Sleeping two in a bed or taking a bath, have you touched your sexual organs, saying that in this manner you will do it, and etc.?

Have you had intercourse with another man? Or have you gone around trying out or making fun in order to do that?

Has someone been investigating you from behind?

Being sick or in some great distress, have you thoughtlessly wished to die?

Have you desired that the chief die in order to become his heir?

Are you sorry for not having changed your life before now and being so late in doing this?

Have you believed that some dreams will come true?

[Education]

# THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT DIALECTICALLY MUST

*The following lessons are from textbooks written for Fidel Castro's literacy campaign, begun in 1961; the books are still in use in many Cuban schools. Today, 97 percent of the Cuban population is literate, and Castro is helping Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez design a literacy program for his country. Translated from the Spanish.*

THEME 1: IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is a common phenomenon of our age. Imperialists are those countries that, having well-developed economies, concentrate a large percentage of capital in the hands of few. They then use that capital to exploit other countries' economies, forcing them to export natural resources and import value-added goods. They thus deform these economies, robbing them of their independence. An imperialist country doesn't necessarily have colonies. Any country that exploits another is imperialistic.

Exercise 1:

Once, the Yankees attacked us. They sent many bad people. They wanted to do away with Free Cuba. The populace defeated them. Fidel led the fight.

Question: What does this say about Fidel?

THEME 2: REVOLUTION

The people need revolution in order to move forward. When one nation is dominated by a more powerful nation, only revolution can wrest control from the foreign power. When the humble citizens of a country live without work, without land to cultivate, without education, they must rise up in revolution.

Exercise 1:

Let's first read and then write: "The fishing cooperative helps the fishermen. They sell fish in the cooperative. Daniel helps to sell. The money is for everyone. The fishermen are no longer exploited. Now the fishermen live better lives. New lives for the fishermen."

Copy in your best handwriting: "Daniel helps to sell."

Exercise 2:

Let's first read and then write: "Today's Cuban is free. The workers build the houses. There will be houses for everyone. New factories will open."

Copy in your best handwriting: "New factories will open."

Exercise 3:

Let's first read and then write: "The lamp was expensive. Mario cleans his weapon. Pura looks at the sea."

Copy in your best handwriting: "Mario cleans his weapon."

THEME 3: A UNITED AND ALERT POPULACE

As the Cuban Revolution is anti-imperialistic, she has powerful enemies waiting to attack her. As the Cuban Revolution is a revolution of the people, the whole populace must be ready to defend her. For this purpose, we organize into militias: workers, peasants, professionals, youth, women, gather at training centers to learn military skills and renounce their leisure time of days past.

Exercise 1:

One day, Fidel met with a group of Pioneers [Young Communists] and told them: We want our children to be the most studious, the best behaved. The child who doesn't study is a bad revolutionary. We want our children to be the

[Agenda]

# THE PAINTING ON THE WALL

*From the minutes of a May meeting of the Associated Students of the University of California, Riverside, the university's student government, as reported in* The Highlander, *the school's student newspaper.*

At the meeting, the senate voted to approve a mural to be placed in the Commons. There was some concern voiced by the senate about the contents of the mural.

"I see some pilgrim invaders here," said Elisa Haro, academic affairs director. "It kind of reminds me of my colonization, and I don't like that."

The artist of the mural said that the pilgrim invaders were meant to be Shakespearean actors and that he would try to make that more clear.

Other concerns with the mural included the depiction of white cranes, which the senate demanded be changed to colored cranes.

They were also concerned with the lack of a same-sex couple depicted, which the artist agreed to add. The senate voted to approve the mural in light of the adjustments being made.



*At the Swimming Pool Party*, by Sebastian Bremer, was on display last spring at Rochester Hill Gallery in Rochester.

happiest. We want to always be proud of our children. The children heard this with great emotion and decided to be better.

Question: How does Fidel want the Pioneers to be?

Exercise 2:

Let's first read and then write: "The main square looks very pretty. The people's militia marches by. Thousands of bandannas saluting. Long live Fidel! The militiaman has a rifle. He loves peace. In good hands, a rifle is good.

Young and old united, we sweat alongside Fidel. Together we will defend Cuba. They'll never defeat us again!"

Copy in your best handwriting. "They'll never defeat us again!"

[Decorum]

# RUDE BRITANNIA

*The following catalogue of inappropriate words and phrases was published in the most recent edition of* The Table, *the journal of Commonwealth parliaments. The catalogue, issued annually, lists all utterances from parliamentary record that were deemed "unparliamentary."*

ALBERTA

Proletariat, you're Red
misled
horseshit

GUJARAT
crocodile tears
Something is being hatched secretly.

INDIA: LOWER HOUSE
Is this fraud, roguery, or cheating?
He is taking a bribe in disinvestment and avoiding inquiry.
Why are you acting as a broker of capitalists?
government is taking kickbacks
rubbish
Sir, he is the man without any shame.
Otherwise, I will teach you a lesson here.
This is government of scamsters.
imperialistic dog
He is doing their service, he is licking their shoes.
A fraud, a hypocrite, this is their hypocrisy.
Was he anyone's father?

KENYA
childish answer
tribalist
nuisance

MANITOBA
scurrilous
Why did the minister lie?
speaking out of both sides of their mouth
get off her butt and do her job

NEW ZEALAND
savaged by a dead sheep
fiddle bunkle
You are an irrelevancy.
quisling
fraud that he is
lacking gumption
squealing like a stuck pig
telling a porky
parliament's thug
lazy member
lifetime communists

QUEENSLAND: LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
As far as I am concerned, he is a political pygmy.
No, I am not a coward. Do you want to come outside? Maybe you would like to do that.
Where is the Premier now? He is hiding in his office like a dingo!
Minister, you are the only dingo here.

SASKATCHEWAN
braying and yelling
What a bunch of phony-baloney hypocrites!
government's main priority being to hide the wrongdoing and make it quietly disappear
government bribes people with their own money
government be condemned for its deliberate strategy to deceive the general public

UNITED KINGDOM: HOUSE OF COMMONS
the cynicism, or perhaps the hypocrisy, of the Prime Minister

VICTORIA: LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
I think you are an appalling woman.

[Remonstrance]

## LEND ME YOUR EARS

*From a speech delivered in June by King Mswati III of Swaziland warning prospective parliamentary candidates against committing ritual murder, versions of which involve removing victims' body parts and using them in potions believed to contain magical properties. According to police reports, before the 1998 parliamentary election, twelve mutilated corpses were discovered in rural areas, a fourfold increase over the annual average. Translated from the Swati.*

We are now talking about the constitution. And when we talk about the constitution you will find that, automatically, we touch upon this and that.

Ladies and gentlemen, election time has come. This is just an admonishment, because when such opportunities come they come with all sorts of catastrophes. Calamities start happening. All of a sudden, you see the disappearance of grandmothers, grandfathers, and even children, and all that. They just disappear. But I want to warn you all that you should not resort to ritual murder. People are thinking, by the time I emerge to the public, when they see me, they will somehow see the person to whom, when I was in the mist of darkness, I did some abominable thing, whom I killed for ritual purposes.

If only we would restrain ourselves in that, because you might be caught. Not that you might be caught, you will definitely be caught, and in the end it will be clear that you were never able to reach your dream of going to Parliament.

This, ladies and gentlemen, is just a general admonition to the country at large: that the whole country would restrict itself, ladies and gentlemen, even in pursuing our reputations. As Swazis we are well known for our self-respect and also for our good behavior. Swazis should continue to build the country and also to behave themselves.

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>
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>
> When I saw the guarantee, I was sold. Where's my credit ca[illegible]
>
> But there's another reason for the guarantee - ethics. Thomas Rollins, president of The Teaching Company, said his company values clients so much, he simply doesn't want them to have any product they don't absolutely love. In our lively phone conversation, he said, "We call our lectures The Great [illegible]ses, and if we don't deliver great [illegible]
>
> Wow! Most people think of customer loyalty as customers being loyal to a business. But how about a business [illegible]

—Dean Rieck,
Direct Marketing magazine
April 2000

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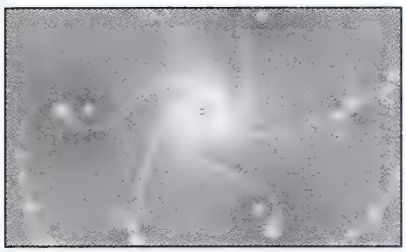
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[Libretto]

## JUST A GIRL WHO CAN'T SAY NO

*From the lyrics to "All Things to All Men," a song from* Pornography: the Musical, *written by the poet Simon Armitage, in which women sing about their experiences in the adult-film industry. The musical was broadcast on British television last fall.*

Yesterday lying alone in a bedroom
Yesterday crying and dying of boredom
But I was a showgirl, destined for stardom

Today I'm the nurse getting off with the doctor
Tomorrow I'm shocked by a driving instructor

Today I'm the teacher who fancies the student
Tonight I'm the student who fancies the teacher
Tomorrow it's fun with a nun and a preacher

Today I'm the girl with a crush on her sister
Tonight I'm the traitor who teases the jailor
Tomorrow I'm taken down south by a sailor

Today I'm surprised by the size of the postman
Tonight I'm alone in the house with a truncheon
Tomorrow I'm frisked by a team of policemen

Today I'm the missus who calls for a plumber
Tonight I'm the stripper who swallows a python
Then bends over backward to help out the juggler
Tomorrow I'm doused with a hose by a fireman

Today I'm a virgin at home on her lonesome
Who's joined by a soldier who makes it a twosome
Who's come with his brother who makes it a threesome
Who's come with his uncle who makes it a foursome
Then in walks a swordsman, an oarsman, a horseman
And five or six pillaging Norsemen—it's awesome

The typist, the gymnast, the tart, and the matron
Yesterday lying alone in a bedroom
Yesterday crying and dying of boredom
But destined for stardom

[Consideration]

## THE AMERICAN ABSURD

*By Don DeLillo, from a November 20* Frontline *forum hosted by Wen Stephenson as an online companion to the documentary* Who Was Lee Harvey Oswald? *DeLillo's fictionalized account of the Kennedy assassination,* Libra, *was published in 1988 by Viking.*

What's at stake is our trust in a coherent reality. That day in Dallas changed the way we think about the world. Powerful events build their own networks of chaos and ambiguity, and the assassination of the president has become a landmark in the history of such events. The physical evidence contradicts itself; the eyewitness accounts do not coincide; there are failures of memory; there are conflicting memories. For forty years, responsible people have disagreed over the number of gunmen, the number of shots, the origin of the shots, the time span between shots, the paths the bullets took, the number of wounds on the president's body, the size and shape of the wounds, and many other crucial details of the basic investigation.

Then there are the human puzzles, the organizational links—Oswald's fragile marriage, his dismal state of mind, his attitude toward Kennedy, his relationships with intelligence agencies. There are the Soviet and Cuban themes, the organized-crime theme, the double-agent theme, and many others, all with their sets of supporting evidence. There are the official documents lost, missing, altered, classified, and destroyed. There is the flood of coincidence, large and small. There is the plausible conviction that Oswald was part of a conspiracy, the sensible belief that Oswald acted alone. A culture of distrust and paranoia began to develop, a sense of the secret manipulation of history, and this feeling intensified through the decades, from Dallas to Vietnam to Watergate to the doorstep of Iraq.

What happened during that moment in Dal-



Suicide, *by Barnaby Furnas, was on display last fall at Marianne Boesky Gallery, in New York City.*

las, and in the months and years before—in Oswald's life—that we can determine with certainty? How did such a vivid fragment of reality, caught on film before hundreds of witnesses, with trained security personnel on the scene, become so deeply lost in the maze of documentation, dispute, rumor, paradox, lies, dreams, illusions, ideologies, absurdities, murders, suicides, and endlessly suggestive human involvements?

Something happened. Oswald fired three shots from a sixth-floor window. But was there something else—a clear motive, a larger design, a second gunman? The truth is knowable. But probably not, ever, incontrovertible.

He didn't think of himself as "Lee Harvey Oswald." The state and the media, in response to significant criminal acts, will sometimes include the subject's middle name as a way of imposing an institutional gravity on the matter. This practice, in Oswald's case, produced an early stereotype, a drifter with three first names and a pale, spare, squinting look—someone superficially familiar. The fact that he was a dead man before the weekend was over created another kind of distance. It is also true that many people did not want to see "the real Oswald" because they were unwilling to grant fully human status to the man accused of murdering the president.

In fact, he may have seemed a little unreal to himself. He used many false names and appears at times less an amateur actor in his own life than a character, someone put together out of doctored photos, tourist cards, mail-order forms, visa applications, and altered signatures. He tried to break out of a marginal life by joining the Marines, then defecting to the Soviet Union, then attempting suicide; by reading Karl Marx and ordering guns through the mail; and by trying to kill Major General Edwin A. Walker, a notorious right-wing figure, in April 1963. It may be tempting to think of Oswald as a figure out of modernist literature, an American variation of Beckett's sad and wailing Krapp, whose last tape (in this case) is secretly fabricated by the KGB or the FBI.

But Oswald *was* real. He loved his daughters, beat his wife, took out the garbage. He did not move from logical set A to logical set B, as such things are configured in most examinations of his life. He was driven, like many of us, by obscure motivations, large and small incon-

[illegible] Walker, he was committing a political act, one that would make him a man in history, which is what he'd always wanted. Seven months later, however, his life was coming down around him. He lived in [illegible] separated from his family, harassed by the FBI, denied a visa to Cuba, working at another dead-end job. Then one day he learned that the president would visit Dallas and that the motorcade, stunningly, would pass the School Book Depository, the building where Oswald worked, at precisely the time when he was most likely to be alone on the sixth floor.

This was not history but dreams, a set of circumstances carrying an eerie power that must have seemed otherworldly to him. Oswald appeared to admire JFK. He tended to see himself in the president. They had things in common. Lee was always reading two or three books at a time, like Jack. Lee did military service in the Pacific, like Jack. His handwriting was awful and his spelling was terrible, just like Jack's. At one point his wife and Jack's wife were both pregnant. Lee had a brother named Robert and so, of course, did Jack.

Oswald would not have walked two blocks to shoot at the president. The president had to come to him, and this is what happened, ruinously, on November 22.

It was an act of naked desperation. Oswald abandoned his claim to history and became the first of those soft white dreamy young men who plan the murder of a famous individual—a president, a presidential candidate, a rock star—as a way of organizing their loneliness and misery, making a network out of it, a web of connections.

Think of Oswald the defector, the pro-Castro activist, the earnest student of world affairs. In the end, there was nothing left of him but a defeated ego, a self isolated from the world and from other people. He fell out of history and politics and became a figure in one of his own bent daydreams.

The twentieth century was built largely out of absurd moments and events. In time we had to invent an adjective, European and literary, that might encapsulate the feeling of impending menace and distorted reality and the sense of a vast alienating force that presses the edges of individual choice.

These things are Kafkaesque.

In America it is the individual himself, floating on random streams of disaffection, who tends to set the terms of the absurd.

A man walks into a diner and shoots eleven strangers. What city was that, and who remembers the shooter's name?

A couple of teenagers wander through their school building shooting teachers and students [illegible] How did this happen, and where exactly, and who were the kids with the guns?

Oswald changed history not only through his involvement in the death of the president but also in prefiguring such moments of the American absurd. He was not media-poisoned, as many of the others have been, and his crime was not steeped in the supermarket cult of modern folklore and dread. But think of the outrages and atrocities that flowed from the psychic disorientation of the 1960s—the assassinations, the cult murders, the mass suicides. It was surely the assassination of President Kennedy that began to give us a sense of something coming undone. This was vintage American violence, lonely and rootless, but it shaded into something older and previously distant, a condition of estrangement and helplessness, an undependable reality. We felt the shock of unmeaning.

If Oswald were truly such a weightless individual, the Warren Report would not have to number twenty-six back-breaking volumes. He was a man who managed in a brief lifetime to compile an extraordinary personal history, dense with incident and shifting context. He joined the U.S. Marines, quoted Marx to his barracks mates, served at a sensitive U-2 base in Japan, and would eventually develop connections of various kinds, some documented, others only conjectured, with people of provocative political shadings—from Tokyo to Moscow to Minsk and from there to New Orleans, Mexico City, and Dallas.

There are the men who knew Oswald. Then there is the man who killed him. More connections, further implications, particularly with regard to organized-crime figures.

It is true that some theorists have searched for the conspiracy that explains everything as a way out of the mist that has drifted through the decades. But who were the conspirators? If there was a plot, it was small, crude, and largely improvised—not the master plan that would allegedly balance the loss of the president. Our state in the world, the fact that we are human, is the only element the equation needs in order to be balanced. We're able to think into the stars, imagine alternative lives for ourselves, and there are times when we feel equal, some of us, to the vast social reality around us.

What else would make a man decide he might run for president?

Oswald was detached, frequently foolish, sometimes cruel, and persistently self-deluding. At times, an unredeemable little rat. But he found a way to link himself with a man who was shaping history. This is what guns are for, to bring balance to the world.



*Four images from* Dress for Eternity, *a series of photographs by Paolo Ventura depicting mummified bodies at the Chiesa dei Frati Cappuccini, in Palermo, Sicily.*

Artwork courtesy Ricco/Maresca Gallery, New York City

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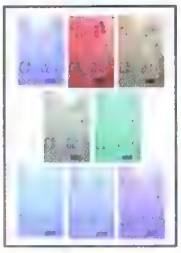
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# THE OIL WE EAT

## Following the food chain back to Iraq

*By Richard Manning*

*The secret of great wealth with no obvious source is some forgotten crime, forgotten because it was done neatly.*—Balzac

The journalist's rule says: follow the money. This rule, however, is not really axiomatic but derivative, in that money, as even our vice president will tell you, is really a way of tracking energy. We'll follow the energy.

We learn as children that there is no free lunch, that you don't get something from nothing, that what goes up must come down, and so on. The scientific version of these verities is only slightly more complex. As James Prescott Joule discovered in the nineteenth century, there is only so much energy. You can change it from motion to heat, from heat to light, but there will never be more of it and there will never be less of it. The conservation of energy is not an option, it is a fact. This is the first law of thermodynamics.

Special as we humans are, we get no exemptions from the rules. All animals eat plants or eat animals that eat plants. This is the food chain, and pulling it is the unique ability of plants to turn sunlight into stored energy in the form of carbohydrates, the basic fuel of all animals. Solar-powered photosynthesis is the only way to make this fuel. There is no alternative to plant energy, just as there is no alternative to oxygen. The results of taking away our plant energy may not be as sudden as cutting off oxygen, but they are as sure.

Scientists have a name for the total amount of plant mass created by Earth in a given year, the total budget for life. They call it the planet's "primary productivity." There have been two efforts to figure out how that productivity is spent, one by a group at Stanford University, the other an independent accounting by the biologist Stuart Pimm. Both conclude that we humans, a single species among millions, consume about 40 percent of Earth's primary productivity, 40 percent of all there is. This simple number may explain why the current extinction rate is 1,000 times that which existed before human domination of the planet. We 6 billion have simply stolen the food, the rich among us a lot more than others.

Energy cannot be created or canceled, but it can be concentrated. This is the larger and profoundly explanatory context of a national-security memo

*Richard Manning is the author of* Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization, *to be published this month by North Point Press.*

committee, ostensibly about Asian policy but really about how the United States was to deal with its newfound role as the dominant force on Earth. "We [possess] about 50 percent of the world's wealth but only 6.3 percent of its population," Kennan wrote. "In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction."

"The day is not far off," Kennan concluded, "when we are [going to have to deal in] straight power concepts."

If you follow the energy, eventually you will end up in a field somewhere. Humans engage in a dizzying array of artifice and industry. Nonetheless, more than two thirds of humanity's cut of primary productivity results from just agriculture, two thirds of which in turn consists of three plants: rice, wheat, and corn. In the 10,000 years since humans domesticated these grains, their status has remained undiminished, most likely because they are able to store solar energy in uniquely dense, transportable bundles of carbohydrates. They are to the plant world what a barrel of refined oil is to the hydrocarbon world. Indeed, aside from hydrocarbons they are the most concentrated form of true wealth—sun energy—to be found on the planet.

As Kennan recognized, however, the maintenance of such a concentration of wealth often requires violent action. Agriculture is a recent human experiment. For most of human history, we lived by gathering or killing a broad variety of nature's offerings. Why humans might have traded this approach for the complexities of agriculture is an interesting and long-debated question, especially because the skeletal evidence clearly indicates that early farmers were more poorly nourished, more disease-ridden and deformed, than their hunter-gatherer contemporaries. Farming did not improve most lives. The evidence that best points to the answer, I think, lies in the difference between early agricultural villages and their pre-agricultural counterparts—the presence not just of grain but of granaries and, more tellingly, of just a few houses significantly larger and more ornate than all the others attached to those granaries. Agriculture was not so much about food as it was about the accumulation of wealth. It benefited some humans, and those people have been in charge ever since.



Domestication was also a radical change in the distribution of wealth *within* the plant world. Plants can spend their solar income in several ways. The dominant and prudent strategy is to allocate most of it to building roots, stem, bark—a conservative portfolio of investments that allows the plant to better gather energy and survive the downturn years. Further, by living in diverse stands (a given chunk of native prairie contains maybe 200 species of plants), these perennials provide services for one another, such as retaining water, protecting one another from wind, and fixing free nitrogen from the air to use as fertilizer. Diversity allows a system to "sponsor its own fertility," to use visionary agronomist Wes Jackson's phrase. This is the plant world's norm.

There is a very narrow group of annuals, however, that grow in patches of a single species and store almost all of their income as seed, a tight bundle of carbohydrates easily exploited by seed eaters such as ourselves. Under normal circumstances, this eggs-in-one-basket strategy is a dumb idea for a plant. But not during catastrophes such as floods, fires, and volcanic eruptions. Such catastrophes strip established plant communities and create opportunities for wind-scattered entrepreneurial seed bearers. It is no accident that no matter where agriculture sprouted on the globe, it always happened near rivers. You might assume, as many have, that this is because

the plants needed the water or nutrients. Mostly this is not true. They needed the power of flooding, which scoured landscapes and stripped out competitors. Nor is it an accident, I think, that agriculture arose independently and simultaneously around the globe just as the last ice age ended, a time of enormous upheaval when glacial melt let loose sea-size lakes to create tidal waves of erosion. It was a time of catastrophe.

Corn, rice, and wheat are especially adapted to catastrophe. It is their niche. In the natural scheme of things, a catastrophe would create a blank slate, bare soil, that was good for them. Then, under normal circumstances, succession would quickly close that niche. The annuals would colonize. Their roots would stabilize the soil, accumulate organic matter, provide cover. Eventually the catastrophic niche would close. Farming is the process of ripping that niche open again and again. It is an annual artificial catastrophe, and it requires the equivalent of three or four tons of TNT per acre for a modern American farm. Iowa's fields require the energy of 4,000 Nagasaki bombs every year.

A FUNCTIONING GRASSLAND PRAIRIE PRODUCES MORE BIOMASS EACH YEAR THAN DOES EVEN THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED WHEAT FIELD

Iowa is almost all fields now. Little prairie remains, and if you can find what Iowans call a "postage stamp" remnant of some, it most likely will abut a cornfield. This allows an observation. Walk from the prairie to the field, and you probably will step down about six feet, as if the land had been stolen from beneath you. Settlers' accounts of the prairie conquest mention a sound, a series of pops, like pistol shots, the sound of stout grass roots breaking before a moldboard plow. A robbery was in progress.



When we say the soil is rich, it is not a metaphor. It is as rich in energy as an oil well. A prairie converts that energy to flowers and roots and stems, which in turn pass back into the ground as dead organic matter. The layers of topsoil build up into a rich repository of energy, a bank. A farm field appropriates that energy, puts it into seeds we can eat. Much of the energy moves from the earth to the rings of fat around our necks and waists. And much of the energy is simply wasted, a trail of dollars billowing from the burglar's satchel.

I've already mentioned that we humans take 40 percent of the globe's primary productivity every year. You might have assumed we and our livestock eat our way through that volume, but this is not the case. Part of that total—almost a third of it—is the *potential* plant mass lost when forests are cleared for farming or when tropical rain forests are cut for grazing or when plows destroy the deep mat of prairie roots that held the whole business together, triggering erosion. The Dust Bowl was no accident of nature. A functioning grassland prairie produces more biomass each year than does even the most technologically advanced wheat field. The problem is, it's mostly a form of grass and grass roots that humans can't eat. So we replace the prairie with our own preferred grass, wheat. Never mind that we feed most of our grain to livestock, and that livestock is perfectly content to eat native grass. And never mind that there likely were more bison produced naturally on the Great Plains before farming than all of beef farming raises in the same area today. Our ancestors found it preferable to pluck the energy from the ground and when it ran out move on.

Today we do the same, only now when the vault is empty we fill it again with new energy in the form of oil-rich fertilizers. Oil is annual primary productivity stored as hydrocarbons, a trust fund of sorts, built up over many thousands of years. On average, it takes 5.5 gallons of fossil energy to restore

Photograph © Walter Hodges/CORBIS

WHEAT WAS THE EMPIRE BUILDER; ITS BARE BOTANICAL FACTS DICTATED THE MOTION AND VIOLENCE THAT WE KNOW AS IMPERIALISM

In 1997 we burned through more than 400 years' worth of ancient fossilized productivity, most of it from someplace else. Even as the earth be-

Six thousand years before sodbusters broke up Iowa, their Caucasian blood ancestors broke up the Hungarian plain, an area just northwest of the Caucasus Mountains. Archaeologists call this tribe the LBK, short for *linearbandkeramik*, the German word that describes the distinctive pottery remnants that mark their occupation of Europe. Anthropologists call them the wheat-beef people, a name that better connects those ancients along the Danube to my fellow Montanans on the Upper Missouri River. These proto-Europeans had a full set of domesticated plants and animals, but wheat and beef dominated. All the domesticates came from an area along what is now the Iraq-Syria-Turkey border at the edges of the Zagros Mountains. This is the center of domestication for the Western world's main crops and livestock, ground zero of catastrophic agriculture.



Two other types of catastrophic agriculture evolved at roughly the same time, one centered on rice in what is now China and India and one centered on corn and potatoes in Central and South America. Rice, though, is tropical and its expansion depends on water, so it developed only in floodplains, estuaries, and swamps. Corn agriculture was every bit as voracious as wheat; the Aztecs could be as brutal and imperialistic as Romans or Brits, but the corn cultures collapsed with the onslaught of Spanish conquest. Corn itself simply joined the wheat-beef people's coalition. Wheat was the empire builder; its bare botanical facts dictated the motion and violence that we know as imperialism.

The wheat-beef people swept across the western European plains in less than 300 years, a conquest some archaeologists refer to as a "blitzkrieg." A different race of humans, the Cro-Magnons—hunter-gatherers, not farmers—lived on those plains at the time. Their cave art at places such as Lascaux testifies to their sophistication and profound connection to wildlife. They probably did most of their hunting and gathering in uplands and river bottoms, places the wheat farmers didn't need, suggesting the possibility of coexistence. That's not what happened, however. Both genetic and linguistic evidence say that the farmers killed the hunters. The Basque people are probably the lone remnant descendants of Cro-Magnons, the only trace.

Hunter-gatherer archaeological sites of the period contain spear points that originally belonged to the farmers, and we can guess they weren't trade goods. One group of anthropologists concludes, "The evidence from the western extension of the LBK leaves little room for any other conclusion but that LBK-Mesolithic interactions were at best chilly and at worst hostile." The world's surviving Blackfeet, Assiniboine Sioux, Inca, and Maori probably have the best idea of the nature of these interactions.

Wheat is temperate and prefers plowed-up grasslands. The globe has a limited stock of temperate grasslands, just as it has a limited stock of all other biomes. On average, about 10 percent of all other biomes remain in something like their native state today. Only 1 percent of temperate grasslands remains undestroyed. Wheat takes what it needs.

The supply of temperate grasslands lies in what are today the United States, Canada, the South American pampas, New Zealand, Australia,

South Africa, Europe, and the Asiatic extension of the European plain into the sub-Siberian steppes. This area largely describes the First World, the developed world. Temperate grasslands make up not only the habitat of wheat and beef but also the globe's islands of Caucasians, of European surnames and languages. In 2000 the countries of the temperate grasslands, the neo-Europes, accounted for about 80 percent of all wheat exports in the world, and about 86 percent of all corn. That is to say, the neo-Europes drive the world's agriculture. The dominance does not stop with grain. These countries, plus the mothership—Europe—accounted for three fourths of all agricultural exports of all crops in the world in 1999.

Plato wrote of his country's farmlands:

> What now remains of the formerly rich land is like the skeleton of a sick man. ...Formerly, many of the mountains were arable. The plains that were full of rich soil are now marshes. Hills that were once covered with forests and produced abundant pasture now produce only food for bees. Once the land was enriched by yearly rains, which were not lost, as they are now, by flowing from the bare land into the sea. The soil was deep, it absorbed and kept the water in loamy soil, and the water that soaked into the hills fed springs and running streams everywhere. Now the abandoned shrines at spots where formerly there were springs attest that our description of the land is true.

Plato's lament is rooted in wheat agriculture, which depleted his country's soil and subsequently caused the series of declines that pushed centers of civilization to Rome, Turkey, and western Europe. By the fifth century, though, wheat's strategy of depleting and moving on ran up against the Atlantic Ocean. Fenced-in wheat agriculture is like rice agriculture. It balances its equations with famine. In the millennium between 500 and 1500, Britain suffered a major "corrective" famine about every ten years; there were seventy-five in France during the same period. The incidence, however, dropped sharply when colonization brought an influx of new food to Europe.

The new lands had an even greater effect on the colonists themselves. Thomas Jefferson, after enduring a lecture on the rustic nature by his hosts at a dinner party in Paris, pointed out that all of the Americans present were a good head taller than all of the French. Indeed, colonists in all of the neo-Europes enjoyed greater stature and longevity, as well as a lower infant-mortality rate—all indicators of the better nutrition afforded by the onetime spend down of the accumulated capital of virgin soil.

The precolonial famines of Europe raised the question: What would happen when the planet's supply of arable land ran out? We have a clear answer. In about 1960 expansion hit its limits and the supply of unfarmed, arable lands came to an end. There was nothing left to plow. What happened was grain yields tripled.

The accepted term for this strange turn of events is the green revolution, though it would be more properly labeled the amber revolution, because it applied exclusively to grain—wheat, rice, and corn. Plant breeders tinkered with the architecture of these three grains so that they could be hypercharged with irrigation water and chemical fertilizers, especially nitrogen. This innovation meshed nicely with the increased "efficiency" of the industrialized factory-farm system. With the possible exception of the domestication of wheat, the green revolution is the worst thing that has ever happened to the planet.

For openers, it disrupted long-standing patterns of rural life worldwide, moving a lot of no-longer-needed people off the land and into the world's most severe poverty. The experience in population control in the developing world is by now clear: It is not that people make more people so much as it is that they make more poor people. In the forty-year period beginning about 1960, the world's population doubled, adding virtually the entire increase of 3 billion to the world's poorest classes, the most fecund classes.

IN ABOUT 1960 EXPANSION HIT ITS LIMITS AND THE SUPPLY OF UNFARMED, ARABLE LANDS CAME TO AN END. THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT TO PLOW



Photograph © Mike Sinclair

EVER SINCE WE RAN OUT OF ARABLE LAND, FOOD *IS* OIL. EVERY SINGLE CALORIE WE EAT IS BACKED BY AT LEAST A CALORIE OF OIL, MORE LIKE TEN.

The way in which the green revolution raised that grain contributed huge [illegible] the population boom, and it is the weight of the population that leaves humanity in its present untenable position.

Discussion of these, the most poor, however, is largely irrelevant to the American situation. We say we have poor people here, but almost no one in this country lives on less than one dollar a day, the global benchmark for poverty. It marks off a class of about 1.3 billion people, the hard core of the larger group of 2 billion chronically malnourished people—that is, one third of humanity. We may forget about them, as most Americans do.

More relevant here are the methods of the green revolution, which added orders of magnitude to the devastation. By mining the iron for tractors, drilling the new oil to fuel them and to make nitrogen fertilizers, and by taking the water that rain and rivers had meant for other lands, farming had extended its boundaries, its dominion, to lands that were not farmable. At the same time, it extended its boundaries across time, tapping fossil energy, stripping past assets.

The common assumption these days is that we muster our weapons to secure oil, not food. There's a little joke in this. Ever since we ran out of arable land, food *is* oil. Every single calorie we eat is backed by at least a calorie of oil, more like ten. In 1940 the average farm in the United States produced 2.3 calories of food energy for every calorie of fossil energy it used. By 1974 (the last year in which anyone looked closely at this issue), that ratio was 1:1. And this understates the problem, because at the same time that there is more oil in our food there is less oil in our oil. A couple of generations ago we spent a lot less energy drilling, pumping, and distributing than we do now. In the 1940s we got about 100 barrels of oil back for every barrel of oil we spent getting it. Today each barrel invested in the process returns only ten, a calculation that no doubt fails to include the fuel burned by the Hummers and Blackhawks we use to maintain access to the oil in Iraq.

David Pimentel, an expert on food and energy at Cornell University, has estimated that if all of the world ate the way the United States eats, humanity would exhaust all known global fossil-fuel reserves in just over seven years. Pimentel has his detractors. Some have accused him of being off on other calculations by as much as 30 percent. Fine. Make it ten years.

Fertilizer makes a pretty fine bomb right off the shelf, a chemistry lesson Timothy McVeigh taught at Oklahoma City's Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995—not a small matter, in that the green revolution has made nitrogen fertilizers ubiquitous in some of the more violent and desperate corners of the world. Still, there is more to contemplate in nitrogen's less sensational chemistry.

The chemophobia of modern times excludes fear of the simple elements of chemistry's periodic table. We circulate petitions, hold hearings, launch websites, and buy and sell legislators in regard to polysyllabic organic compounds—polychlorinated biphenyls, polyvinyls, DDT, 2-4d, that sort of thing—not simple carbon or nitrogen. Not that agriculture's use of the more ornate chemistry is benign—an infant born in a rural, wheat-producing county in the United States has about twice the chance of suffering birth defects as one born in a rural place that doesn't produce wheat, an effect researchers blame on chlorophenoxy herbicides. Focusing on pesticide pollution, though, misses the worst of the pollutants. Forget the polysyllabic organics. It is nitrogen—the wellspring of fertility relied upon by every Eden-obsessed backyard gardener and suburban groundskeeper—that we should fear most.

Those who model our planet as an organism do so on the basis that the earth appears to breathe—it thrives by converting a short list of basic elements from one compound into the next, just as our own bodies cycle oxygen into carbon dioxide and plants cycle carbon dioxide into oxygen. In fact, two of the planet's most fundamental humors are oxygen and carbon dioxide. Another is nitrogen.





Photograph © Mike Sinclair

Nitrogen can be released from its "fixed" state as a solid in the soil by natural processes that allow it to circulate freely in the atmosphere. This also can be done artificially. Indeed, humans now contribute more nitrogen to the nitrogen cycle than the planet itself does. That is, humans have doubled the amount of nitrogen in play.

This has led to an imbalance. It is easier to create nitrogen fertilizer than it is to apply it evenly to fields. When farmers dump nitrogen on a crop, much is wasted. It runs into the water and soil, where it either reacts chemically with its surroundings to form new compounds or flows off to fertilize something else, somewhere else.

That chemical reaction, called acidification, is noxious and contributes significantly to acid rain. One of the compounds produced by acidification is nitrous oxide, which aggravates the greenhouse effect. Green growing things normally offset global warming by sucking up carbon dioxide, but nitrogen on farm fields plus methane from decomposing vegetation make every farmed acre, like every acre of Los Angeles freeway, a net contributor to global warming. Fertilization is equally worrisome. Rainfall and irrigation water inevitably washes the nitrogen from fields to creeks and streams, which flows into rivers, which floods into the ocean. This explains why the Mississippi River, which drains the nation's Corn Belt, is an environmental catastrophe. The nitrogen fertilizes artificially large blooms of algae that in growing suck all the oxygen from the water, a condition biologists call anoxia, which means "oxygen-depleted." Here there's no need to calculate long-term effects, because life in such places has no long term: everything dies immediately. The Mississippi River's heavily fertilized effluvia has created a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico the size of New Jersey.

AGRICULTURE IN THIS COUNTRY IS NOT ABOUT FOOD; IT'S ABOUT COMMODITIES THAT REQUIRE THE OUTLAY OF STILL MORE ENERGY TO *BECOME* FOOD



America's biggest crop, grain corn, is completely unpalatable. It is raw material for an industry that manufactures food substitutes. Likewise, you can't eat unprocessed wheat. You certainly can't eat hay. You can eat unprocessed soybeans, but mostly we don't. These four crops cover 82 percent of American cropland. Agriculture in this country is not about food; it's about commodities that require the outlay of still more energy to *become* food.

About two thirds of U.S. grain corn is labeled "processed," meaning it is milled and otherwise refined for food or industrial uses. More than 45 percent of that becomes sugar, especially high-fructose corn sweeteners, the keystone ingredient in three quarters of all processed foods, especially soft drinks, the food of America's poor and working classes. It is not a coincidence that the American pandemic of obesity tracks rather nicely with the fivefold increase in corn-syrup production since Archer Daniels Midland developed a high-fructose version of the stuff in the early seventies. Nor is it a coincidence that the plague selects the poor, who eat the most processed food.

It began with the industrialization of Victorian England. The empire was then flush with sugar from plantations in the colonies. Meantime the cities were flush with factory workers. There was no good way to feed them. And thus was born the afternoon tea break, the tea consisting primarily of warm water and sugar. If the workers were well off, they could also afford bread with heavily sugared jam—sugar-powered industrialization. There was a 500 percent increase in per capita sugar consumption in Britain between 1860 and 1890, around the time when the life expectancy of a male factory worker was

Photograph © Richard Hamilton Smith/CORBIS

VEGETARIAN HABITS ARE KINDER TO ANIMALS, THOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE

There is another energy matter to consider here, though. The grinding, milling, wetting, drying, and baking of a breakfast cereal requires about four calories of energy for every calorie of food energy it produces. A two-pound bag of breakfast cereal burns the energy of a half-gallon of gasoline in its making. All together the food-processing industry in the United States uses about ten calories of fossil-fuel energy for every calorie of food energy it produces.

That number does not include the fuel used in transporting the food from the factory to a store near you, or the fuel used by millions of people driving to thousands of super discount stores on the edge of town, where the land is cheap. It appears, however, that the corn cycle is about to come full circle. If a bipartisan coalition of farm-state lawmakers has their way—and it appears they will—we will soon buy gasoline containing twice as much fuel alcohol as it does now. Fuel alcohol already ranks second as a use for processed corn in the United States, just behind corn sweeteners. According to one set of calculations, we spend more calories of fossil-fuel energy making ethanol than we gain from it. The Department of Agriculture says the ratio is closer to a gallon and a quart of ethanol for every gallon of fossil fuel we invest. The USDA calls this a bargain, because gasohol is a "clean fuel." This claim to cleanness is in dispute at the tailpipe level, and it certainly ignores the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, pesticide pollution, and the haze of global gases gathering over every farm field. Nor does this claim cover clean conscience; some still might be unsettled knowing that our SUVs' demands for fuel compete with the poor's demand for grain.

Green eaters, especially vegetarians, advocate eating low on the food chain, a simple matter of energy flow. Eating a carrot gives the diner all that carrot's energy, but feeding carrots to a chicken, then eating the chicken, reduces the energy by a factor of ten. The chicken wastes some energy, stores some as feathers, bones, and other inedibles, and uses most of it just to live long enough to be eaten. As a rough rule of thumb, that factor of ten applies to each level up the food chain, which is why some fish, such as tuna, can be a horror in all of this. Tuna is a secondary predator, meaning it not only doesn't eat plants but eats other fish that themselves eat other fish, adding a zero to the multiplier each notch up, easily a hundred times, more like a thousand times less efficient than eating a plant.

This is fine as far as it goes, but the vegetarian's case can break down on some details. On the moral issues, vegetarians claim their habits are kinder to animals, though it is difficult to see how wiping out 99 percent of wildlife's habitat, as farming has done in Iowa, is a kindness. In rural Michigan, for example, the potato farmers have a peculiar tactic for dealing with the predations of whitetail deer. They gut-shoot them with small-bore rifles, in hopes the deer will limp off to the woods and die where they won't stink up the potato fields.

Animal rights aside, vegetarians can lose the edge in the energy argument by eating processed food, with its ten calories of fossil energy for every calorie of food energy produced. The question, then, is: Does eating processed food such as soy burger or soy milk cancel the energy benefits of vegetarianism, which is to say, can I eat my lamb chops in peace? Maybe. If I've done my due diligence, I will have found out that the particular lamb I am eating was both local and grass-fed, two factors that of course greatly reduce the embedded energy in a meal. I know of ranches here in Montana, for instance, where sheep eat native grass under closely controlled circumstances—no farming, no plows, no corn, no nitrogen. Assets have not been stripped. I can't eat the grass directly. This can go on. There are little niches like this in the system. Each person's individual charge is to find such niches.

Chances are, though, any meat eater will come out on the short end of this argument, especially in the United States. Take the case of beef. Cattle are grazers, so in theory could live like the grass-fed lamb. Some cattle cultures—those of South America and Mexico, for example—have perfected wonderful cuisines based on grass-fed beef. This is not our habit in the United States, and it *is* simply a matter of habit. Eighty percent of the grain the United States produces goes to livestock. Seventy-eight percent of all of our beef comes from feed lots, where the cattle eat grain, mostly corn and wheat. So do most of our hogs and chickens. The cattle spend their adult lives packed shoulder to shoulder in a space not much bigger than their bodies, up to their knees in shit, being stuffed with grain and a constant stream of antibiotics to prevent the disease this sort of confinement invariably engenders. The manure is rich in nitrogen and once provided a farm's fertilizer. The feedlots, however, are now far removed from farm fields, so it is simply not "efficient" to haul it to cornfields. It is waste. It exhales methane, a global-warming gas. It pollutes streams. It takes thirty-five calories of fossil fuel to make a calorie of beef this way; sixty-eight to make one calorie of pork.

Still, these livestock do something we can't. They convert grain's carbohydrates to high-quality protein. All well and good, except that per capita protein production in the United States is about double what an average adult needs per day. Excess cannot be stored as protein in the human body but is simply converted to fat. This is the end result of a factory-farm system that appears as a living, continental-scale monument to Rube Goldberg, a black-mass remake of the loaves-and-fishes miracle. Prairie's productivity is lost for grain, grain's productivity is lost in livestock, livestock's protein is lost to human fat—all federally subsidized for about $15 billion a year, two thirds of which goes directly to only two crops, corn and wheat.

This explains why the energy expert David Pimentel is so worried that the rest of the world will adopt America's methods. He should be, because the rest of the world is. Mexico now feeds 45 percent of its grain to livestock, up from 5 percent in 1960. Egypt went from 3 percent to 31 percent in the same period, and China, with a sixth of the world's population, has gone from 8 percent to 26 percent. All of these places have poor people who could use the grain, but they can't afford it.

I live among elk and have learned to respect them. One moonlit night during the dead of last winter, I looked out my bedroom window to see about twenty of them grazing a plot of grass the size of a living room. Just that small patch among acres of other species of native prairie grass. Why that species and only that species of grass that night in the worst of winter when the threat to their survival was the greatest? What magic nutrient did this species alone contain? What does a wild animal know that we don't? I think we need this knowledge.

Food is politics. That being the case, I voted twice in 2002. The day after Election Day, in a truly dismal mood, I climbed the mountain behind my house and found a small herd of elk grazing native grasses in the morning sunlight. My respect for these creatures over the years has become great enough that on that morning I did not hesitate but went straight to my job, which was to rack a shell and drop one cow elk, my household's annual protein supply. I voted with my weapon of choice—an act not all that uncommon in this world, largely, I think, as a result of the way we grow food. I can see why it is catching on. Such a vote has a certain satisfying heft and finality about it. My particular bit of violence, though, is more satisfying, I think, than the rest of the globe's ordinary political mayhem. I used a rifle to opt out of an insane system. I killed, but then so did you when you bought that package of burger, even when you bought that package of tofu burger. I killed, then the rest of those elk went on, as did the grasses, the birds, the trees, the coyotes, mountain lions, and bugs, the fundamental productivity of an intact natural system, all of it went on. ■

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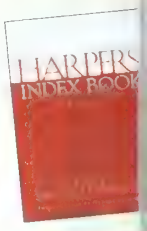

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# THE GREAT CENTRALIA COAL FIRE

## How one small mining town went up in smoke

*By Jeff Tietz*

In 1962, outside the mining town of Centralia, Pennsylvania, some remnant coal in an exhausted mine tunnel caught fire. Centralia was an Appalachian valley town of 1,100 people. It had a streetcar, convent, dance hall, and VFW post, and the minor idiosyncratic shops of a tailor, shoemaker, electrician, druggist, and general practitioner. It was unimaginable at the time that the infant coal fire—a half mile away, eminently controllable, extremely lazy, and incapable of breaching the natural barriers that protected most of the town—would, ultimately, destroy Centralia.

Today Centralia's fourteen vestigial residents live in eight listingly narrow row houses dispersed across the vast, vaguely numinous vacancy opened up by the destruction of everything else. Greenbrier and mountain laurel and wintergreen have overgrown the faint remains of Centralia's homes and buildings. Stone curbs and concrete-cast front steps and the long-clotted mouths of storm drains are occasionally visible through a clamor of shock-troop vegetation. Dandelion and clover have colonized and expanded a median strip: the granular asphalt on either side now narrowly borders a lane of bloodroot and dogtooth violet and honeysuckle.



AMERICAN LEGION VETERANS MEMORIAL IN CENTRALIA

Centralia's valley is moist and nearly silent and framed by oak-black ridges; the streets that oriented its buildings all eventually dead-end in an onrush of new trees. Every year or so a bear runs through town.

The people in Centralia's eight estranged row houses were raised there; so were their parents and grandparents and great-grandparents. They all want to die there. Established in 1866 in the anthracite region of eastern Pennsylvania, Centralia was a town of miners descended from immigrant Polish and Welsh and Ukrainian and Irish and Russian miners. Hundreds of two-story brick row houses, each twelve feet wide, rose up the hillsides in strict parallel lines. The town had five churches, three Catholic and two Russian Orthodox, with plump, gilded domes. There was a polka dance hall. Irish Americans said "commode" instead of "toilet" and called movies "fill-ems."

Centralia's houses and lawns, amid the greened ruins, are in mint condition. Every winter the Hynoski brothers, Steve and Tommy, who own a coal-hauling business, plow the necessary streets. During Christmas they light a fir tree and illuminate a manger scene at the town's former main intersection. On Labor Day weekend, they host a party in the low, ersatz-modernist municipal building, whose ubiquitous twenty-year-old mildew can be felt in the lungs. The party is attended by everyone in town and many former residents heartbroken by their exile. The Hynoskis hire a polka DJ and the older people dance, and some-

*Jeff Tietz's last article for* Harper's Magazine, *"The Boy Who Loved Transit," appeared in the May 2002 issue.*

Photographs by David Graham

or Lamar Mervine
ing impaired, occupyi
having for decades ign
sign in front of
question, he says, "No report."

Joe Moyer, a retired miner with a truculent silver crew cut who generally spends his mornings training homing pigeons for racing and his afternoons breathing oxygen from a tank, has appointed himself town constable. He patrols Centralia in a black Mercury. Several years ago he noticed Bernie Darrah reclining motionless in his easy chair in front of his living-room window. Darrah, a widower, had died in the presence of no one. One of Moyer's self-assumed duties is seeking out the unnoticed dead.

Moyer also takes care of the thousands of interred, unlocking the gates of Centralia's biggest cemetery, St. Ignatius, every morning, and locking them at night. When Moyer is away gambling with his girlfriend in At-

on West Park Street, be-
the gatekeeper. Lokitis fanati
accidental shrine op-
te his house: a broad park lawn
American Legion Veterans'
memorial. Lokitis is thirty-three. He
Park
erations of his family. Now, like Joe
Moyer, he is the only person living
on his street: Bernie Dar-
rah was his final neighbor.

Coal fires require oxygen, an absence of moisture, and fuel. The rubbly scattershot nature of residual coal in defunct mines, the general scarcity of subterranean oxygen, and the general prevalence of underground water make coal fires fantastically lethargic, although they are capable of rare quicksilver dashes when the relevant variables harmonize.* But coal fires are also so absurdly intransient as to seem almost

*Oxygen-to-fuel ratio is one of the most important variables, because the ratio of surface area to flammable mass determines the combustion rate of a given fuel. Oil, for example, is usually burned after dispersion through nozzles into fine droplets have a relatively huge surface area. The ragged blackness of old mine coal means that its oxygen-exposed surface is, relatively, very small. A seamless wall of coal will not burn, though it will radiate combustible gases in the presence of sufficient heat and oxygen.*

immortal to survive. As embers in chrysalis, coal fires need very little oxygen—a seventh of atmospheric content. Extensive mining and raucous topography create infinite brooks and runnels and fluviations of underground air. By disintegrating mining infrastructures and desiccating ceilings of soil and rock, coal fires cause subsidence, which broadly exposes them to surface air. They can breathe wherever veins outcrop; they can spread by sending explosive gases far in advance of their flames. Their heat, which can reach 12,000 degrees, is intensely dehydrating—it conditions fuel long before consumption and simultaneously elicits highly flammable gases. In warm, airy circumstances, coal spontaneously combusts. The coal beneath Burning Mountain, in Australia, has been on fire for 2,000 years.

The genesis of the Centralia fire was some burning trash in a municipal dump that could have been extinguished with a few shovelfuls of sand. The dump was in an abandoned stripping pit that cut into older deep-mine workings. The mouths of those workings hadn't all been filled, and in May of 1962 the trash fire crawled into a mine tunnel. When the trash-pit fire was discovered, the Borough of Centralia (BOC) and Township of Conyngham (TOC) spent a month fighting over whose problem it was. TOC finally browbeat its way to victory. BOC called the Pennsylvania Department of Mines and Mineral Industries (DMMI), whose deputy secretary reported the fire to the research director of DMMI's Anthracite Division (DMMI–AD), who called the U.S. Bureau of Mines (BOM).

On July 26, 1962, BOM and DMMI personnel visited the site and discussed the situation. On July 30, those personnel and BOC representatives discussed the situation. According to a report later released by BOM, "It was recognized that the situation was serious and required immediate action." On August 6, the aforementioned parties met and talked about the fire. "The consensus," BOM's report states, "was that the fire must be extinguished as soon as possible as it appeared that the fire was spreading rapidly." Mandatory

**ACRONYM KEY**

| | |
|---|---|
| ARC | Appalachian Regional Commission (federal) |
| BOC | Borough of Centralia |
| BOM | Bureau of Mines (federal) |
| CCAGCMF | Concerned Citizens Action Group against the Centralia Mine Fire |
| CCRA | Columbia County Redevelopment Authority |
| COC | County of Columbia |
| DEH | Department of Health (state) |
| DEP | Department of Environmental Protection (state) |
| DER | Department of Environmental Resources (state) |
| DMMI | Department of Mines and Mineral Industries (state) |
| DMMI-AD | Department of Mines and Mineral Industries, Anthracite Division |
| DOI | Department of the Interior (federal) |
| OSM | Office of Surface Mining (federal) |
| PDCA-DPD | Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, disaster programs division |
| PEMA | Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency |
| RSBC | Residents to Save the Borough of Centralia |
| TOC | Township of Conyngham |

protocols would delay BOM's participation for at least three months, so ts deputy secretary suggested to DMMI's secretary that DMMI initiate the project. The deputy secretary and secretary and their deputies elected to rip open the burning tunnel and fill it with earth.

It was impossible to calculate the fire's speed, but DMMI was certain it hadn't gone far, and the standard practice of exploratory drilling was expensive. After following procedure and soliciting project bids, DMMI ordered blind excavation from the trash pit outward. At the end of August, work began. Overtime and weekend work were not permitted; holiday stoppages were obligatory. Actually, the fire had gone pretty far. It outpaced the sluggish, serial work of drilling, blasting, and excavation, except perhaps early on, but then came Labor Day and everybody went home for five days. At the end of October, work stopped, because DMMI had exhausted its allotted funds. Oxygen exposure had quickened the fire.

In late November, BOM and DMMI drilled eighty boreholes through which a noncombustible slurry could be injected. The slurry was supposed to fill mine voids and suffocate the fire. DMMI meant to ensure that the boreholes were drilled ahead of the fire, but it didn't. Many were drilled right into the fire, an action that, according to a DMMI inspector, "created, like, a volcano. And oh boy, when that busted, did that shake things and make a noise! It was red hot mad!"

DMMI worried that its allocation of slurry was insufficient—engineers could only roughly estimate the volume of the mine voids—and it wanted to get some slurry into every one of its mandated boreholes, so its inspectors forbid workers to completely fill the space beneath any individual borehole. That gave the fire eighty potential escape hatches. For some reason the boreholes were never capped, and every unsealed hole became a little bellows. By March of 1963, funds had again been exhausted. "No degree of control," BOM's report stated, "had been achieved."

While the agencies deliberated and solicited new proposals, the fire burned for five months. Work on a containment trench began in July of 1963, but the burning tunnel was unexpectedly hot when workers hit it. Digging ten feet beyond the fire's terminus to cut it off required deviating from the sanctioned work plan, which DMMI supervisors would not allow. Work halted. The fire, again rejuvenated through sustained oxygenation, burned for three and a half years.



A STEAMING PIT OUTSIDE OF TOWN

During this time, Dr. H. Beecher Charmbury, head of DMMI, had been attending to politically expedient projects and waiting for Congress to create the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), which would be responsible for extinguishing mine fires. In June of 1965, BOM and DMMI submitted a new proposal to ARC. Thirteen months later, the required Contribution Contract had been signed by ARC, DMMI, BOM, and the County of Columbia (COC), in which BOC is located. Bids were advertised on July 21, 1966. When BOM's standard 16 percent planning and engineering fee was added to the low bid, the project cost exceeded the ARC-authorized amount. This necessitated an amendment to the Contribution Contract, which ARC granted on September 12. Several unforeseen obstacles delayed the start of work until May of 1967.

The enlarged fire almost immediately exhausted the project's allotment of slurry. Dr. H. Beecher Charmbury promised to authorize the purchase of more slurry, but he didn't. Two years passed. Since anthracite fires are too resourceful to be fully contained by borehole flushing, which restricts but can't totally sever access to fuel and oxygen, a fence of boreholes filled with noncombustible fly ash was drilled, and a small trench was dug to complement it. Test drilling, however, soon found that 40 percent of the boreholes did not provide an effective barrier: the settling of the fly ash had goaded the fire into jumping the fence. The trench project ran out of money just as it drew abreast of the fire, causing a young BOM engineer named John Rosella to cry. Funds for corrective work were requested, and two years later ARC gave its approval. The money arrived in February of 1973. Another borehole fence was completed on December 14.

By late 1975, the fire's reconnoitering gases had stolen through many of the borehole barriers; the fire flowered in behind them. The boreholes had either been incompletely filled or left vulnerable by fly-ash settlement. BOC convinced ARC to dig a new trench, but then picked a fight with COC over the purchase and relocation of several homes in the trench's path. The differences were not reconcilable, and the coal fire finally, fitfully sidled up to Centralia.

In the late fall of 1979, David Lamb, owner of the Speed Spot motorcycle shop, noticed that he couldn't light his coal furnace: carbon monoxide from ambient coal combustion had displaced most of the oxygen in his basement. John Coddington's son Joseph discovered that the basement walls of the family home were hot.

hem, it was like
into existence in
Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) buried earth into the crater, which forced gusts of carbon monoxide into adjacent homes, dizzying dozens of people and killing an ornamental canary in its cage. The state withdrew from the scene.

In the impact zone, windows were kept open, snow vanished according to the contours of the fire's intensity, water ran hot from cold-water taps, and steam from heated asphalt obscured roads. John Coddington passed out in his sleep and was taken to a hospital, where doctors pumped oxygen into his lungs and he thanked God for sparing his life. David Lamb's asthmatic daughter was hospitalized for oxygen deprivation.

A year passed without government aid. Then a twelve-year-old boy named Todd Domboski saw smoke rising in thin myriad rivulets from his grandmother's yard. The smoke signals exerted an irresistible attractive force on the boy: as he approached them he dropped into the earth, which had just metamorphosed into a 135-degree sinkhole full of carbon monoxide. He grabbed a tree root and hung for several infinite moments, until his cousin, according to a newspaper account, "yanked [him] back from hell." He wasn't injured, but two months later his mother, Florence, was still trying to "keep him calm with medication."

The Domboski affair prompted the state to install gas detectors with alarms that sounded like canaries. In certain homes, the alarms could not be heard by residents in their bedrooms. The state set up an office in a trailer and staffed it with DEP inspectors, who hesitated to attribute the gas infiltration to the fire. One inspector told David Lamb that the gases responsible for his daughter's hospitalization came from sewer-line leakage. DEP officials told Joan Girolami that her carbon monoxide came from cigarette smoking in the [illegible] and running her car in the garage. But she didn't smoke in the basement and she didn't have a car. When Joe Moyer heard his alarm and called the DEP trailer, a group of inspectors arrived, said the problem was his coal furnace, which he knew to be sound, and sat down in his kitchen to have a smoke. Several inspectors were later fired when they inadvertently stuck their sewage line into a pit obliquely connected to one of the fire's shoots.

> IN THE IMPACT ZONE, SNOW VANISHED, WATER RAN HOT FROM COLD-WATER TAPS, AND STEAM FROM HEATED ASPHALT OBSCURED ROADS

Six months after Todd Domboski's descent—David Lamb's daughter had been hospitalized twice more for oxygen deprivation—the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) provided temporary housing for, it said, everyone in the fire zone, which was not everyone. The many afflicted people who didn't get housing continued to open their windows when gas levels spiked, except when they couldn't hear their alarms.

In August of 1981, Tony and Mary Androtti stood outside the refuge of their PEMA-issue mobile home, one in a row of mobile homes in an abandoned schoolyard. At their feet was a pot of dying marigolds. They had planted a small American flag in their implicit front yard. "Every man's home is his castle, and now these are ours," Mr. Androtti said, cinematically, when a reporter asked him about his recent experience. Healthy flower beds surrounded his condemned home in the fire zone. He went back to water them, and mow the lawn, every day. He looked down at the surrogate marigolds, aridly genuflecting in their pot. "I guess I neglected them," he said.

Coverage was regional and national and international. People in the fire zone were being interviewed five times a day. "My God, what are we to do?" Todd Domboski's grandmother kept asking. The question became a subhead in a feature story and was subsequently amplified by national syndication. In the papers, the fire was a "smouldering . . . inferno" (*London Times*) with a "thousand-degree" heart (*Los Angeles Times*) that was creeping "along beneath Centralia . . . sending foul gases to the surface" (*Columbus Dispatch*). "The flames lick[ed] the ribs of the earth under Centralia" (*Toronto Star*). At any time the fire "might cause the earth to open up and swallow the town" (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*). "Shroud[ing] the Centralia region with smoke" (*New York Times*) and "belching smoke into the air, [the fire] . . . had all but destroyed the little town" (*Los Angeles Times*), which looked like "some primordial planet where the earth belches noxious gases" (*New York Times*). The *Toronto Star* noted that Centralia, which had "literally gone to blazes," made a "neat side trip for Canadians heading to Florida."

In late 1981, PEMA and the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) agreed on a buyout plan for twenty-seven homes in the fire zone. As if the fire were incidental, the buyout offers took fire depreciation into account, and the delineation of the relocation zone excluded many people who were directly experiencing, or fresh from directly experiencing, the fire's effects: inclusion in the buyout plan became the working definition of actionable suffering.

Joan Girolami—thirty-nine, daughter of a miner who had lost his arm in the mines, periodically gas-drunk during the fire's first foray into town, and unable to hear her gas detector from her bedroom—had been excluded. She and several other oxygen-deprived, relocation-excluded citizens affixed red ribbons—symbols of the fire's dominion—to their porches. Girolami founded Concerned Citizens Action Group Against the Centralia Mine Fire (CCAGCMF). David Lamb, whose buyout offer was far below pre-fire market value and whose marriage had begun to dissolve, immediately became active in CCAGCMF. Girolami assumed the vice presidency, and for president chose Thomas Larkin.

Larkin, forty-two, had been away from Centralia for twenty years, several of which he had spent in a Catholic seminary, although he never became a priest. He had come back three years earlier to care for his dying mother. Her house, in which he had been born and raised, was remote from and immune to the fire. After his mother died, he told a reporter, he suddenly woke up to the fire. "I started to walk around the town, and I saw steam coming up, pipes in the middle of the street here and steam coming up there, and I thought, Jeez, what the hell is going on here?"

Tall and slender and mustachioed, Larkin owned more than 300 illustrations and miniatures of elephants. He listened to classical music and read H. P. Lovecraft and used Latin phrases at critical moments in conversations. He worked as a short-order cook at Snyder's Restaurant in the neighboring town of Ashland; after interviewing Larkin, a reporter came away with the impression that Snyder's was "universally acknowledged as the best eating place around." The terms "universally acknowledged," "best," "eating place," and "around" were all controversial.

"One would think," Larkin said in another interview, "that a crisis situation like this would bring the people together and make the people stand up and be counted, as it were. To speak with one voice and say, Look, it's gone on long enough, we want an end to this. But it has not. And I cannot fathom why. I think it's that many people may suffer from what might be called the ostrich syndrome."

Lamb, Larkin, and Girolami began appearing on local television. Stressing the fire's predatory unpredictability, they argued for total relocation, or at least a greatly expanded program. "Someone's going to have to die here before we get the help we need," Girolami said. "You never know," said Lamb. "Any day a house and everybody in it could sink out of sight." Larkin said, "I'm sure part of the town will have to be destroyed."

CCAGCMF came up with a plan, leaked but never realized, to sue the federal government. It organized small protests in Harrisburg. Larkin erected a sign in front of his house: THE U.S. DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR PLAYS NERO WHILE CENTRALIA BURNS. After alerting the media, Larkin, Lamb, and Girolami traveled to Washington and gave a desk set of anthracite coal to each of their congressional representatives. On *Good Morning, America,* Larkin explained about fiery wrath; beside him little Todd Domboski trembled and nodded his big-eyed head. When *People* came to town, Larkin put on a chef's hat and apron, cracked an egg into a frying pan, and steamed it over a fire-vent fissure for the magazine's photographer. After about fifteen minutes, the yolk firmed up.

These activities, Larkin admitted, were socially costly: "I have relatives in this town who don't talk to me anymore, which hurts, it hurts tremendously." Centralia's mayor, John Wondoloski, said CCAGCMF's members just wanted to sell their homes at high prices. Helen Womer, who lived closer to the fire than anyone and called it "overrated," said CCAGCMF was just "a vehicle for Girolami to ride out of town in." Its members, she said, were not even worth talking about. Larkin was in it "for the publicity, for the notoriety. He's been catapulted from obscurity. I'm not talking about Thom, because he makes me so mad—his theatrics, for one thing . . ." "It's too bad," Eileen Lamb said of the conflict, shortly before she and her husband broke up. "People here were so close, if you sneezed at St. Ignatius they'd say God bless you at Duffy's."



MAYOR LAMAR MERVINE

Despite the discord, most of Centralia's miners were unconcerned. They could visualize the topography of the region's anthracite veins. The fire was confined to a six-foot-thick sheet of coal, the Buck Mountain bed, which undulates through the region in quick-veering synclines and anticlines. The fire was mainly burning in an access tunnel called a gangway, which had been cut east-west into the hill that rises to Centralia's southern border. The coal bed, following the hill's contour, ascends south toward the hilltop and out of Centralia, and descends north into the water table, which shielded about two thirds of the town. The network of tunnels around the gangway was largely unmapped, and the deeper tunnels underlay dozens of homes, but the miners who had worked in the tunnel network thought the fire's ventilation system made its spread from the gangway very unlikely.

Almost everyone in town thought the water table would permanently halt the fire, and many understood the ventilation dynamics of the mine workings. The combustion itself was inconspicuous. The fire's sheer slowness made subsidence rare, and the width of the coal bed kept it modest: when the earth above a six-foot vein collapses, it has six feet in which to fall, and the sharp angling of the Buck vein diminished the effect. Slender smoke in the fire zone was winkingly visible to the rest of the town; most people could smell the silent fire only when the wind was right, and there was no visible flame. For the small minority that supplied CCAGCMF's membership, which peaked at twenty-five, life could be

face Mining (OSM) announced around [illegible] and safety," said Secretary of the Interior James G. Watt. "No Centralia [illegible]," said Dr. James [illegible] of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DEH), "has ever had a dangerous level of gases." Several months later the fire made international headlines by exploding out of a rock face east of town. "It'll come at night the whole area glows," a volunteer firefighter said. "Blue flame shoots out." The temperature of the radiating cliffside was 1,200 degrees. "There's no danger," said Paul Farley, a district manager for OSM. "The only danger might be from people wandering in, looking around, not having an understanding of where to walk."

These pronouncements, which received heavy coverage and provoked CCAGCMF condemnation, made Governor Richard Thornburg and Centralia's congressional representatives uncomfortable, although within weeks a heat-provoked landslide had ended the fire's first and only surface appearance. Representative James L. Nelligan (R.) requested a nonbinding referendum on further relocation; he wanted to know "how far to go in seeking help for the community." Written by CCAGCMF members, the referendum basically asked whether people affected by the fire should receive government help. Compensating victims seemed like basic compassion, and the referendum received overwhelming support.

Press coverage transformed this vote into the final plea of a burning people. For years officials cited it as a collective desire they could not ignore. Governor Thornburg said the vote was "a first step in the battle against this fire." While the story was still fresh, Pennsylvania's politicians shoved OSM into a collaboration with DEP on a new borehole project. "By the spring of '83," said General DeWitt Smith, of PEMA, "we will know who the enemy is, where he is, how big he is, and what [illegible] to expose."

But OSM spent several years fighting DEP over money, during which time no action was taken, and then withdrew from the project pending the results of a fire-assessment study it had commissioned. (BOM's 1980 report on the fire came with substantial cost estimates, and any practical wisdom it might have contained was immaterial to OSM, because no oracle could foretell the success of its recommendations, and any expensive failure might inspire big coal producers to force the repeal of the tax on which OSM depended.)



[illegible] FIRE HYDRANT

Meanwhile, in the referendum's wake, Reverend Anthony McGinley founded Residents to Save the Borough of Centralia (RSBC). Its mission was to prevent the relocation advocated by CCAGCMF and preserve the municipal government. At its rallies, RSBC's "Set Centralia Free!" chant was accompanied by church bells and the sound of town ambulance. Problems developed between RSBC and CCAGCMF. "All we want," Reverend McGinley soon felt moved to say, "is not to be harassed." But sympathy for RSBC was general and ardent. Thom Larkin received death threats and a succession of heavy-breathing phone calls, developed a duodenal ulcer, and resigned the presidency of CCAGCMF. He was replaced by a Catholic nun and community organizer named Sister Honor Murphy.

OSM had hired a small engineering firm called GAI Consultants. GAI rejected almost all of BOM's conclusions. BOM's 110-page, six-month study was the collaboration of a score of mining geologists, physicists, and chemists. It contained pretty much everything the Bureau of Mines, which was founded in 1910, had ever learned about anthracite fires.* Its authors concluded that two thirds of Centralia was protected by natural barriers, and estimated the cost of rehabilitating and shielding the exposed third at $33 million.

GAI completed its study in a little over two months, during which time OSM bureaucrats bearing caveats and qualifications visited incessantly. Through its "visual examination of core samples," GAI determined that the fire, despite many intervening feet of unfissured rock, had spread to several shallower coal beds and thus could surmount Centralia's water table. The authors of the BOM report looked at GAI's seared core samples and saw natural discoloration. The entire borough, GAI said, would eventually perish if the fire was not completely extinguished, and that would cost more than half a billion dollars.

Relocation, Representative Frank

*Problems in the Control of the Centralia Mine Fire *has ten tables; an appendix for surface-air sample data; three-dimensional structural models with surface overlays; stratigraphic cross-sections; computer-generated thermal contour maps; mine maps delineating tunnels, slopes, water levels, temperature areas, and phases of various firefighting projects; and multiple graphs, including three-dimensional temperature perspectives and anthracite-oxidation rates ("dimensionless") plotted against borehole temperature data.*

Harrison (D.) said, "becomes something you've got to think about." Four months later, in November of 1983, Harrison was standing on the steps of the Capitol with Sister Honor Murphy and a dozen CCAGCMF members, announcing that Congress had appropriated $42 million for the total relocation of Centralia. "This," Harrison said, "is being able to tell people who have been suffering for a generation that government does work." "I'm delirious with joy," Sister Murphy said. Several days later, at a borough council meeting delayed for thirty minutes by a Girl Scout party that ran long, the residents of Centralia gathered to hear John G. Carling, chief of the disaster programs division of the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs (PDCA–DPD), explain the relocation program and its administering organization, the Columbia County Redevelopment Authority (CCRA). "All you folks want," Carling began, "is to live a life of your own in a house of your choosing."

William Klink, CCRA's director, sent the homeowners of Centralia a first and final offer to sell, and set a deadline for acceptance. Those who refused would have a worthless home: the state had outlawed home sales in Centralia, and the fire had decimated property values. When the deadline passed, non-sellers were notified of their expulsion from the program. Several weeks later they were readmitted and offered a better deal. Klink's officials visited homes carrying contracts that would expire, they said, without an immediate signature. CCRA officials occasionally lied and said the contracts were not legally binding but would preserve the homeowner's future right to sell. Officials sometimes arrived with a contract in the evening, consented to a one-day extension, and returned at eight the next morning. Houses sold, absolute deadlines were extended and then extended again, people were expelled from the program and readmitted and given additional incentives, houses sold, and so on, through nearly ten cycles over a decade.

CCRA concentrated pressure on residents in the center of a block. If the street could be cored, the people on either side of the breach would face at least a year of retrofitting: their homes would be extremely loud and poorly insulated and their basements unusable. If they opted out of this ordeal and moved, another set of neighbors would be subject to retrofitting. Many blocks capitulated before the state demolished anything.

Odd, protean regulations governed the relocation. For several years people were required to relocate no less than seven miles, but no more than fourteen miles, from Centralia. Only one piece of land satisfied this criterion: a swamp, known as Mosquito Farm, next to a sewage-treatment plant. CCRA spent $50,000 building elevated roads and walkways so that prospective residents could tour the site without sinking. Several years after the agency moved ten families into a new subdivision, it widened the boundaries of the fire zone and condemned their homes.

IN CENTRALIA, ABANDONED ROW HOUSES, FUSED TO THEIR INHABITED NEIGHBORS, STOOD DECOMPOSING LIKE BAD TEETH

Sister Honor Murphy founded a contracting company to build houses for relocating Centralians. By 1986 most of Centralia's homes had been condemned. Before leaving, many residents performed the rite of entrusting their house keys to Molly Darrah, who kept them in a blue enamel box in her living-room breakfront until she died. Two Centralians who had spent years resisting the momentum of emigration died of heart attacks while moving out. An elderly retired miner received an eviction notice when his landlord decided to sell, and instead of complying shot his wife, drove to the top of the ridge south of town, and immolated himself in his car.

The fire was obediently following the gangway out of town. People who questioned its hazards were referred by Klink and Carling to the GAI report. "There's a new report!" Carling liked to tell people who mentioned the BOM study. Several years later he said, "All the studies show that eventually the fire will threaten the whole town. Not today, maybe. But it's coming." State geologist Steve Jones said he "could not rule out" the wholesale consumption of Centralia by fire. Years of CCRA mailings threatened the condemnation of unsold property and warned of the great dangers of subsidence and gas infiltration. "I suspect this town is going to cease to function as a town," Klink said. "I don't see they have any other choice." He expected to finish the project by 1988.

In the papers, Centralians had become a stubborn breed with "stubborn offspring" who, despite a "vast," "huge," "gigantic," and "spreading" fire that had poisoned people with gases and tried to eat a child, "refused to acknowledge their impending doom." "The remaining old timers," reported the *Times* of London, "just laugh!"

An improvisational comedy troupe in Chicago named itself Centralia. They were inspired, member Kevin Scott told the *Chicago Sun-Times*, by "the remaining people there who have this undying hope in the face of the impending doom that surrounds them. So we do characters who are always hopeful." James Finney Boylan set a satiric novel, *The Planets*, in Centralia. In one scene skydiving Centralians find themselves beyond the reach of mine-fire smoke for the first time in their lives, and then gravity pulls them back to burning earth in which the bones of their buried pets are smoking.

In Centralia, abandoned row houses, fused to their inhabited neighbors, stood decomposing like bad teeth. CCRA neglected its condemned houses for four years. Rain and rats and mice and squirrels and birds got in; people from all over the region came to scavenge doorknobs and light fixtures and cabinets. Sometimes they came in the middle of the night. A campaign of calls to the governor's hotline finally forced CCRA to demolish the condemned homes. Entire blocks came down around single houses. Everyone who hoped that the exodus would stop lost hope. By 1992, when the state exercised its power of eminent domain and took possession of Centralia's land and

remained.

maintained the grass protes-

Klink and Carling got impatient. CCRA, Carling told the residents of [illegible] through [illegible] good neighbor. Lawn maintenance ended. The Centralia borough council, on the advice of its lawyer, which it had retained to fight the state's eminent-domain claim, passed a resolution requiring property owners to keep their lawns below six inches. The noncompliance fine was set at a thousand dollars, per parcel, per day. The state, which had not consolidated its land, held 130 parcels.

The morning after CCRA received notification of the new ordinance, a fleet of tractors restored the vacant lots of Centralia to sleekness. According to residents, Klink told a local reporter that Centralia was trying to "cash in on the good will of the state." The lawn care lasted a few months, and then a judge denied Centralia's eminent-domain appeal. CCRA sent an eviction notice to every home. Centralia's residents didn't think CCRA wanted to drag resisting old people out of their homes in front of TV cameras—Klink recently said that "someone fairly high up" is worried about "political fallout," and that CCRA plans to let the old people die before it forcibly evicts anyone—but they also knew that $4 million in monthly fines might overturn that restraint. The borough never enforced its ordinance. The grass turned to weeds, the weeds grew to heights of five feet, and Centralia filled with skunks and snakes and porcupines and rabbits and groundhogs and foxes and black-footed ferrets, and the prevalence of these creatures attracted bears.

One spring several years later, CCRA spent $100,000 on wildflower seeds, sprayed herbicide over much of Centralia, and sowed the seeds several layers deep all over town. Several months later CCRA explained that the state was testing wildflower species for a median-strip beautification program. In the meantime, the residents of Centralia [illegible] ably illuminated to its edges by poppies, daisies, black-eyed Su[illegible]

Today the valley at Centralia is almost wholly green, but at long intervals the pointless streets, variously shattered by the uprut of weeds along faultlines, pass objects left behind during the exodus. While walking through the vacuity of town to the space across the street from the space her home had occupied, Sarah Yeager avoided contemplating these objects: a child's sound machine—a plastic ring activated, once, by buttons illustrating a pig, a horse, a rooster; a mobile home pierced from within by saplings; a gamut of shag rug, still rolled but signed by innumerable raindrops and torqued, as if it had been jettisoned from a truck; a Ford Escort knee-deep in bloodroot whose paint still throws off new dimes of sunlight.

Yeager was born and raised in Centralia, in a house her great-grandfather built before the coal companies put up row houses, but had to leave in 1999 because her roof leaked and she could no longer carry buckets of coal up the basement stairs. She was sixty-one, unmarried and without children, living on a fixed income. Because she no longer owned her home, she was ineligible for a home-improvement loan and legally barred from putting a trailer on her former property. So she took what the state offered and moved over the hill to the town of Aristes. By then most of her neighbors had died or been unable to afford essential repairs or grown terrified of being Centralia's final citizen, and the state's red symbols of imminent demolition had flashed on hundreds of surrounding doors. Her own row house, structurally incapable of standing alone, had been reinforced with H-beams and vibrated impressively as its immediate neighbors were prized meticulously away. For a decade she had solitarily occupied a plain of shorn foundations.

Sarah Yeager is a dainty and resolute person with a dropsical torso and insubstantial legs that dangle when she sits in a chair. She collects calendar Barbie Dolls and sells Centralia souvenirs for the benefit of the miniature municipal treasury. She tried, she told me when I visited her in Aristes, to watch the demolition of her home: "I walked down the hill and sat on the curb. The construction fellas said, Sarah, what are you doing? I said, I wanna see it. They said, No, it's too heartbreaking. I left after the roof. And for two years afterward I used to walk down every other day and sit on the curb and just look at my house."

Yeager said she sometimes stopped in the center of town, where, across the street from the long-condemned Speed Spot, a wooden heart is nailed to a tree. Fastidiously painted to resemble a valentine, the heart says WE LOVE CENTRALIA. Beneath the heart is a congregational array of wooden benches and lawn chairs. Pete Kenenitz, exiled not long after Sarah Yeager, created the memorial. When I called him he suggested that we meet at the heart.

Kenenitz is a retired miner of seventy-three with nebulous eyes and limited mobility. He showed up with a large mass of chewing tobacco in his cheek; he wore red suspenders and a baseball cap that said CENTRALIA 125TH ANNIVERSARY. We sat under the heart. Two tourists in a white hatchback pulled up. One yelled to Kenenitz, "Can you tell me where the fire's located at, buddy? We been driving all over!" Out of habit, Kenenitz got up, worked his way over to the car, and directed them to the hillside southeast of town, where a swatch of heat devastation—bordered and punctured by new growth, and occupying about ten acres—smolders meekly: if the sun is obscured and you get close and look long enough, one or two uptricklings of translucent smoke gradually become visible.

I asked Pete Kenenitz what Centralia had been like. "Best place in the Anthracite!" he said. "We had a goddamn grand thing of it here one time. It ain't that I wanted to go. I hadda go. The lawyer we had says, Keep patchin' your house up, keep patchin'. I said, I need a new furnace, I need a new roof. He says, Patch, patch." He grinned, and then pointed out his condemned, unaccompanied row house, several lots distant. Except for a thin coat of dilapidation, the house looked as if its owners had just left: in the yard, which showed the evaporating organization

of a gardener, a wooden bucket was wound above a stone well, and two fading, intact cars were aligned in front.

Kenenitz told me he walked around the house and looked into it sometimes. "But I cry too much," he said, "and then I say I'm never gonna do it again. I always go back, though." He paused. "There was a barroom right where we're sittin'," he said. "Ted Muldowney's bar. Know how many times I was in there? And the bar was right here too." He got up, took a few ruminative steps, and ran his hand along the bar top.

The exile Ray Reilly arrived. Every day he descends on the Centralia heart from Aristes, which he calls Centralia Heights, with several albums of Centralia photographs. When Reilly and Kenenitz encounter each other at the heart, which is several times a month, they look at the photographs. I introduced myself; Reilly handed us each a thick album. Kenenitz opened his album and his attention immediately contracted. He began to say emphatic things to himself, in a low voice.

Reilly, a lurching overbuilt guy in a CENTRALIA FIRE DEPARTMENT T-shirt of his own design, is a retired heavy-equipment operator and unilateral, self-sustaining talker. He's always reminding himself of something: the bureaucratic friction that kept him from receiving a Korean War medal, the capabilities of the Opec projector he used to sketch the Centralia firefighter onto his T-shirt, the relative merits of Wal-Mart as a place to buy wading pools for dogs. He told me that he usually finds no one at the Centralia heart: an unnaturally high percentage of older residents died soon after they were relocated; many are buried in Centralia.

Centralia now has a two-man P.R. team: the mayor, Lamar Mervine, and John Comarnisky, a high school physics teacher who is forty-nine and lives with his brother and mother in the only other house on the mayor's street. Reporters are referred to Mervine, who calls Comarnisky, who walks over, and they give interviews together on Mervine's porch. They want people to understand that Centralia is green and quiet and not aflame, and that they are not insane. They had just explained





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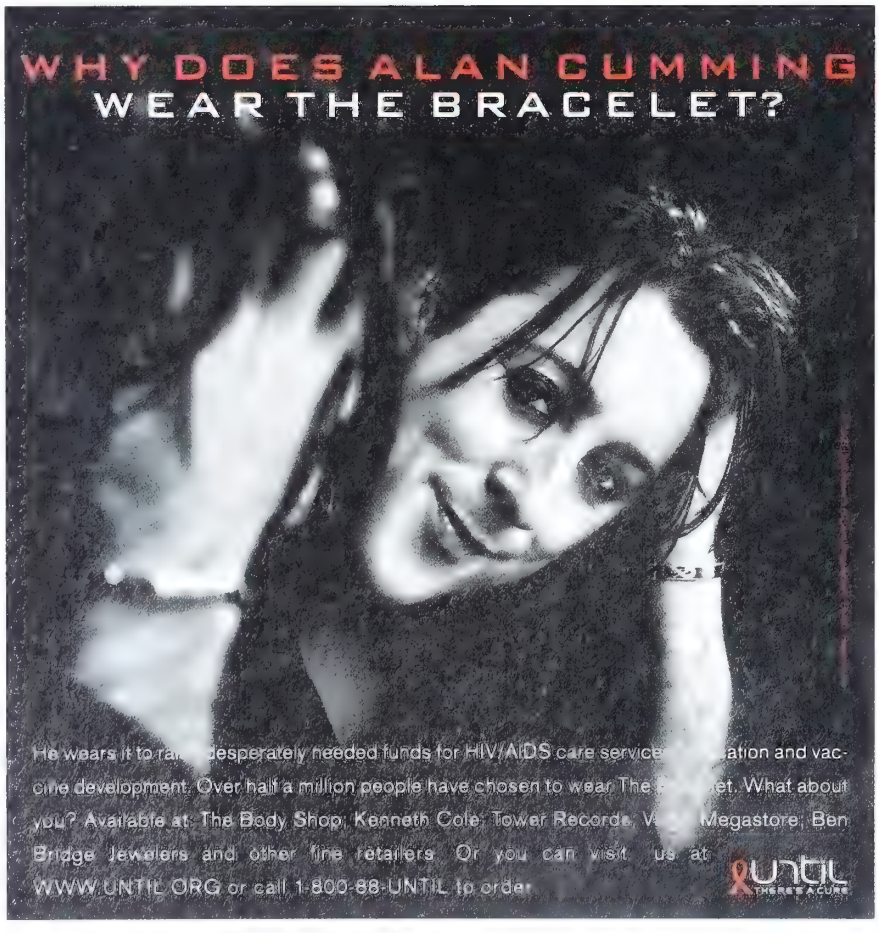
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Mervine's porch [illegible] window. "I'm sorry to bother you," he said, "but I'm looking for Centralia, the town that's on fire? Where the heck is it? I guess I missed the kid."

The adversary of the Centralia PR team is Steve Jones, who conducts regular tours of the fire zone for tourists and reporters. Borehole temperatures in the borough have fallen steadily for at least a decade—the fire departed the borough proper in the mid-nineties—and Mervine and Comarnisky say that Jones's estimate of the fire's duration, and the minimum temperature he gives as evidence of its vitality, have fallen proportionately.* Jones generally gives tours on what he calls "good viewing days": when it's raining and scattered patches of heated earth steam visibly. When he is forced to give a tour on a clear day the fire is invisible, so he generates steam by pouring water on the ground. Standing in his steam, he tells people he cannot rule out the immediate cremation of Centralia.

Signs around the fire zone, erected by the state, read:

> WARNING—DANGER
> UNDERGROUND MINE FIRE
> WALKING OR DRIVING IN THIS AREA
> COULD RESULT IN SERIOUS INJURY
> OR DEATH
> DANGEROUS GASES ARE PRESENT
> GROUND IS PRONE TO SUDDEN
> COLLAPSE

These signs, Comarnisky and Mervine told me, went up a few weeks before I arrived, because CNN had informed the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) that it wanted to do a story on the fire. DER, without telling CNN, put the signs up the next day. The signs featured prominently in CNN's piece. The day of the shoot was clear, and Steve Jones showed the crew how to make steam.

In the summer of 2001, Comedy Central did a story on Centralia. The interviewer asks Mayor Mervine what [illegible] has changed [illegible] mayor says, "Well, we have plenty of parking now." After the scene in which the reporter [illegible] that is apparently burning his feet, and after the scene in which he pulls on an oven mitt and pats the mayor on the back and each pat produces [illegible] again after a steaming-earth close-up, the show cuts back to Mayor Mervine saying, "Well, we have plenty of parking now."

One of the most recent interviews Mervine and Comarnisky gave was to the *New York Times*:

> The fire in an abandoned mine under this hard coal hamlet still burns down below as doggedly as the 86-year-old mayor, Lemar [*sic*] Mervine, holds out here above, refusing to vacate the wasted landscape of a condemned ghost town.

"Centralia's a dangerous place to be," Steve Jones says in the article. The fire has "a history of people overcome by carbon monoxide gases in their homes. A few have slipped into holes as the ground subsides." Mervine and Comarnisky would have responded that the fire is not burning in Centralia and therefore cannot be burning beneath Mayor Mervine's porch, and that it has been two decades since anyone in town inhaled the fire's fumes or encountered subsidence.

Mervine and Comarnisky talked about the Mammoth vein, an 84-million-ton anthracite bed beneath Centralia with a retail value estimated to be in the tens of billions of dollars.* Centralia, very unusually, owns its own mineral rights, and when municipal governments in Pennsylvania cease to exist, their mineral rights revert to the state. At least one coal company has offered to buy the town; the initial offer was $20 million. Comarnisky and Mervine told the *New York Times* that they thought the value of the Mammoth had influenced the management of the fire:

> Of course they cannot document such a scheme, the two concede. But as they sit in solitude on the porch, their conspiracy theory clearly strikes them as more palpable and comforting than the fire below.

One day Joe Moyer and I were sitting in folding chairs on his flawless lawn, listening to his homing pigeons coo and observing their interactions. "They mate for life," he said. "You never see any cheatin'." When they return after a flight of two or four or six hundred miles, they coalesce above the house and circle their coops for a few minutes before descending. "That Jones did one of his tours the other day," Moyer said. "They were all in ponchos and umbrellas, drinkin' and havin' a good old time, while the steam's comin' up and he's tellin' 'em the town's in danger. If he comes near here I'll punch him in the mouth. I'll knock his fuckin' head off! He's a fuckin' phony to make the best of 'em!" Moyer coughed for several minutes. I asked about the future of Centralia. "I'll never see it, but I think the time'll come when this place'll be rebuilt," he said. "I just have that hunch. I could be a thousand percent wrong."

"It never occurred to me that I should leave," John Comarnisky told me a few days later on Lamar Mervine's porch. "I have a case of arrested emotional development. I'm a perpetual seventeen-year-old. I drive a Camaro—it's an older Camaro, but I can't seem to get rid of it." Comarnisky is thick-legged; he has a hospitable, appraising face and a heavy, kempt mustache. When he was young, he'd left Centralia to get a degree in physics and work for General Electric.

He moved back to Centralia and

** The duration estimate has gone from 500 to 100 years, and although the universal criterion for a live mine fire is 200 degrees, Steve Jones has said that borehole temperatures of 55 degrees, a normal underground temperature, can indicate a live fire.*

** Coal is sedimentary, and anthracite is the oldest and therefore most pressure-cooked species: the hardest, purest (in carbon content), rarest, and most valuable. Eastern Pennsylvania has most of the anthracite deposits in the United States, and the Mammoth is the region's largest vein. Bituminous coal is the next best (West Virginia, western Pennsylvania), then subbituminous, then brown (China's gigantesque [illegible]), and then a kind of coal prototype called lignite. Anthracite burns very slowly, very cleanly, and with great heat. Lignite is so immature and watery it's almost [illegible] and its many impurities produce a comprehensive [illegible]. Brown is also pretty bad: hundreds of coal fires in northern China burn 200 [illegible] tons of coal each year, or 20 percent of the country's output, and produce as much carbon dioxide annually as all the cars and light trucks in the United States.*

started teaching physics, which suits him. "What would be really, really, really nice . . . Hmmmph!" he said. "If they gave us the properties back. They're not letting us get on with our lives. I'd like to buy some land and build a cedar cabin. I put my roots down here, and I feel real comfortable here. When I get home from teaching in the evenings I go out in the back yard and I can smell the clover and the pine, and after a few minutes I'm real relaxed. There's not too many places that can do that to me."

"It's strange," John Lokitis told me, sitting in his narrow-gauge living room beneath large photographic portraits of his great-grandparents. "You watch everything you ever knew slowly being erased." He has a sandy, medium-size appearance; his pensiveness doesn't quite arrive at melancholy. Lokitis works in Harrisburg, auditing firearms dealers for the state.

"But I busy myself taking care of the grounds," he said. "Trying to keep it like the street that time forgot." Ruefully and self-consciously, he laughed. "I put the landscape timbers around the Legion memorial, and the marble stone and flowers around the base, and I painted the bench and stenciled the CENTRALIA 1866 on it. And the flag flying there is mine. The Legionnaires come and fly a flag on Memorial Day, but they take it down, and I've always liked to see a flag flying over the grounds."

From his living room, Lokitis has a clear view of the memorial and the flag and the valley of Centralia and the ridge beyond. The nonstop hills and valleys around Centralia are how the anthracite veins run. From hilltops the terrain reiterates itself to the limit of your vision. The natural misalignment of receding ridges creates views, through illusory notches and blue atmosphere, of distant valleys. Encircling the current emptiness of Centralia are dozens of inhabited valleys that precisely replicate the former Centralia: Minersville and Port Carbon and Ashland—collections of two-story, twelve-foot-wide brick row houses, rising up the hillsides in strict parallel lines that church spires dutifully interrupt. ■






SOLUTION TO THE JANUARY PUZZLE

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NOTES FOR "STRIP MINING":

*The unclued entries are CARTOON COUPLES.*

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov.*

*Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

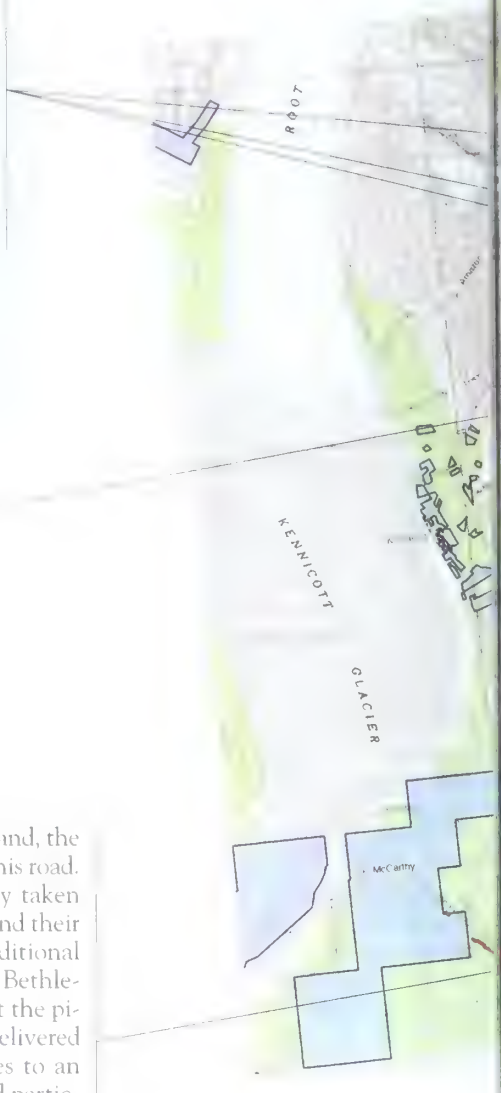
ACROSS: 1. h(0)icks; 6. S-Ky-jacks; 11. *; 12. h(I do)ut; 13. p-mat(rev.); 14. (M)organ; 15. sum (two mngs.); 16. *; 17. s(O)up; 18. supple-mentally; 19. s(moo)ch.; 21. a(R.C.)s; 23. homophone; 26. age-NT; 27. *; 31. *; 32. Til(si)t; 37. two anagrams; 39. two mngs.; 40. E.-qua(I)l; 41. hidden; 42. two mngs.

DOWN: 2. (m)oral; 3. in-corpor(E.)al; 4. cat-pan(rev.); 5. S('em)ite.; 7. OK(rev.)-OK-i.e.-r; 8. *; 9. console; 10. U-du(c)k (rev.); 19. *; 20. co(a)t; 22. con-do; 24. homophone; 28. *; 29. E.-pony-Ms.; 30. homophone; 33. stoa(t); 34. face-t(he); 35. as-pen; 36. rev.; 38. hidden.

# UNHAP

## A repealed, Civil War–era law still

Robert and Kurina Hale own 410 acres of land, spread over these three parcels, on a steep glacial valley deep in America's largest national park, the Wrangell–St. Elias National Park and Preserve in Alaska. The Hales call their land "Hillbilly Heaven" and themselves an "honest, old-fashioned Jesus family." In 2002, Robert Hale started up his 1941 D4 Caterpillar, a nine-ton bulldozer with a nine-foot blade, and cut a thirteen-mile road through parkland to the town of McCarthy. Hale claimed he had the right to do so under R.S. 2477, an obscure, one-sentence federal law from 1866 that was repealed in 1976. His is not an isolated case. With the support of the Bush Administration, and against the pleas of wilderness advocates, tens of thousands of newly cleared roads may crisscross the nation's parks, preserves, and forests, all on the basis of a defunct, 138-year-old law.




Hale's route followed, more or less, an overgrown trail known as the McCarthy–Green Butte road. Under R.S. 2477, which stated simply that "the right-of-way for the construction of highways over public lands, not reserved for public uses, is hereby granted," Hale contends that he is allowed to use this trail in any way he pleases, because it was a road at some point during the 110 years while the law was in effect. Says Hale, who currently is in the process of legally changing his name to "Pilgrim": "It's just part of a state network of roads, same as the highways. . . . It's how we get home." Although many other such claims have been made by individual landowners, the great majority have been made by state and local governments. Last January, the Bush Administration issued a rule that offers "disclaimers of interest" to essentially anyone who claims a grandfathered route under R.S. 2477, enabling thousands of new claims to decades-old roads.

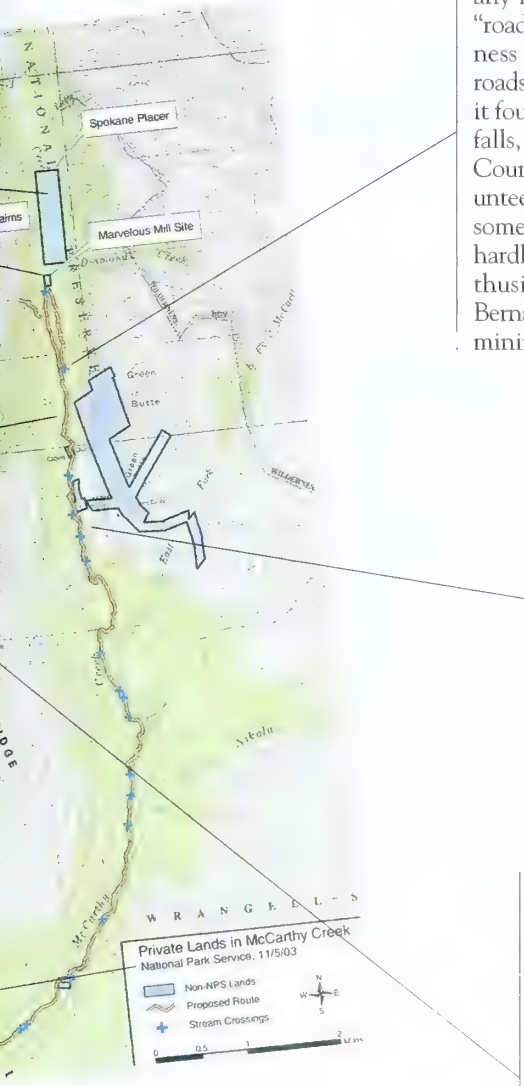
Alarmed that a bulldozer was being driven through parkland, the National Park Service padlocked Hale's Cat and closed his road. Legal wrangling followed. The Hales' case was quickly taken up by various conservative groups, for whom the Hales and their fifteen children—who all live in a small cabin, play traditional instruments, and have taken biblical names, including Bethlehem, Moses, Noah, Job, and Psalms—seem to represent the pioneer ideal. Local supporters organized an "airlift" that delivered more than sixty planeloads of food, fuel, and supplies to an airstrip on the Spokane Placer. The family has received particular help from the Pacific Legal Foundation, whose mission "against overreaching government" is funded in part by industry, including the paper/lumber giants Georgia-Pacific and Weyerhaeuser. The foundation has provided its lawyers to the Hales pro bono and has termed the N.P.S.'s actions "another chapter in the federal government's ongoing land grab."

# TRAILS

## s the wilderness, *by Bryant Urstadt*

These pluses are the seventeen points where Hale's path crosses McCarthy Creek. Because the original bridges washed out long ago, the N.P.S. argues that the route no longer exists, and that any new road would have to deviate from it. Other R.S. 2477 "roads" nationwide are even harder to find. When a Utah wilderness group tried to verify some of the state's 20,000 claimed roads—which include every hiking trail in Zion National Park—it found faint paths that followed wash bottoms, went up waterfalls, or ended at canyon walls. In California's San Bernardino County, which has claimed 5,000 miles of R.S. 2477 roads, volunteers found routes following old cattle paths and dry streambeds; some could not be located at all. The haziness of these routes is hardly discouraging to the Blue Ribbon Coalition, an off-road enthusiasts' group that identified and proposed claims for San Bernardino. Once established, the roads might find use among the mining, gas, and timber companies that help fund Blue Ribbon.

Here, an N.P.S. field team found a 145-year-old tree that had been toppled by Hale's bulldozer. Environmental groups are aghast at the scope of the damage that could be done by R.S. 2477 roads nationwide. Much of the worry is over endangered animal populations: for example, nearly half of the roads claimed by San Bernardino County run through "critical habitat" areas of the desert tortoise, a threatened species. Also in danger are wilderness areas that have yet to be protected by the government. In some cases, municipalities have been filing for claims precisely to forestall such federal protection, which could ban mining and industry on the protected lands. Last year, when the board of Moffat County, Colorado, petitioned for more than 2,000 miles of R.S. 2477 roads, it did so with the stated intention of protecting oil, gas, coal, and gravel interests there.




"Bonanza" is, for those with personal or professional reasons to clear a road though public land, an apt term to describe the Bush Administration's attitude toward R.S. 2477. Since releasing its new disclaimer rule last January, the administration has also expedited the process of approving claims for roads. The already favorable climate, fostered by Interior Secretary Gale Norton—formerly of the Mountain States Legal Foundation, which specializes in suing the government on behalf of ranchers, miners, and others seeking to use federal land—will only be more so now that Mike Leavitt, the staunchly pro–R.S. 2477 governor of Utah, is running the E.P.A. Robert Hale, for his part, is confident that he will prevail: the office of Frank Murkowski, Alaska's governor (who himself wants to use R.S. 2477 to build fourteen new highways on federal land), recently sent Hale a letter assuring him that his road was a recognized R.S. 2477 route. "I really believe God is with us," says Hale, adding, "It's a really beautiful road."

*Urstadt's last article for* Harper's Magazine, *Act Farce," appeared in the June 2003 issue.*

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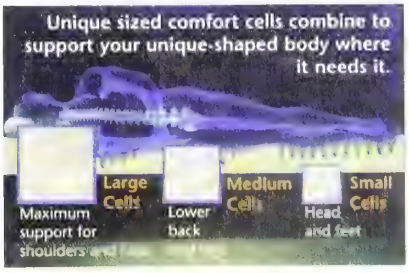
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# HISTORY

*By Nadine Gordimer*

The parrot's been thirty years an attraction in this restaurant, but of course nobody knows how old it is. A parrot can live for a century, it's said—probably an old seafarer's tale; didn't the birds used to be sailors' companions on ancient lonely voyages? They were brought to Europe from Africa, the Amazon, everywhere what was thought of as The World sent ships lurching, venturing the seas to worlds known by others. Those others couldn't speak, so far as the sailors were concerned—that is, not the language of the sailors, whatever it might be. But the bird could. Very soon it asked questions, made demands, cursed, even laughed in their language. The world of others talked back from what The World was set to make of those others—its own image. The sailors didn't know—does anyone—how a bird can speak. But it did. And as if it understood, at least the laughter, the abuse. Else how could it have produced the expression of these?



That's all centuries ago, the restaurant parrot must have come from a pet shop, though Madame Delancy remembers it was given to her husband by some friend. —We would never have bought a parrot! For a restaurant! It's not a zoo!— But she gives a tilt-of-the-head greeting to the parrot as to a member of the staff, or rather a member of the family, because this is a restaurant in the South of France of the usual village kind where the employees are all descendant from the chef father and the hostess mother to sons and daughters and even grandchildren who come by on their *vélos* to eat and help clear tables, after school.

The parrot's plumage is green and yellow, with a touch of red somewhere, a grey curved beak that, because the creature's been there as long as the founding habitués at their tables, seems to have aged that way like some old man's nose. English tourists and those retired from their cold shires, by their culture amateur ornithologists, know that the parrot is African, and also know him by name, Auguste. But the most constant clientele, out as well as in season, is local. The older habitués, native and foreign, have seen them, heard them grow up, from the time of baby carriages, the racing past tables chasing balls, to the sexy tattooed biceps, the giggling and flirting over cigarettes, the transformation of bared

*Nadine Gordimer is the author of nine volumes of stories—most recently,* Loot and Other Stories *(2003)—thirteen novels, and three non-fiction collections. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1991. She lives in Johannesburg, South Africa.*

*The Green Parakeet*, by Vincent van Gogh © Christie's Images/CORBIS

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be-ringed navels to the swelling mounds of pregnancy.

In season the parrot in his domed cage is outdoors under a tree on the territory of the *place* where the restaurant spreads its tables and umbrellas. Out of season he is thrust away with summer in a corner of the restaurant if the weather is bad; a sort of hibernation imposed on him that is surely contrary to the cycle of his species, wherever its origin. Sometimes there's even his nighttime cloth thrown over the roof of his cage. Take a nap. But most of the year, in that mild climate, he is at his post outdoors in the middle of the day, and clients favour eating there. —Auguste! Hullo!— People call out as they stroll to be seated. —Auguste! Bon jour! — As if they must be acknowledged by him, the sign, the character of their choice of where to eat and drink, as some feel prestige in being recognised by a *maître d'hôtel*. And with the assertion of dignity of a maître d' sometimes he calls back or murmurs in that mysterious throat of his—Hullo bon jour.— Sometimes not. He pretends to be busy attending to some displacement of his plumage or shifting the precise prehensile grip of his claws. They, like his beak, have taken on the human characteristics of the clients beyond his cage but long around him—the skin of the claws of his kind of hands furrowed, hardened, cross-wrinkled by mutual ageing.

Parents send their children from the tables to greet him. Go and see the parrot, say something to it, it can talk, you know. So the adults get rid of infant chatter and whining. Don't put your finger through the bars! This's not a kittycat! Go—see that parrot over there?

The children surround the cage and stare. His half-lidded insignificant eyes—he is all beak, all the attribute of what takes food and utters—look back at them as a public figure endures the sameness of the face of the crowd. He won't speak though mummy and daddy say so and what mummy and daddy say must be true. Right. Auguste is presumed to be a male because of his raucous voice: suddenly he obliges with raging shrieks, the yells of a street fight. Some children run away, others laugh and tease him for more. It's as if inappropriate violence has brought an unsuitable reminder to the pleasant security of choosing from the menu with the member of the chef's family offering advice of the specials of the day. Madame Delancy may even come out, shrugging and smiling, gently to direct the taunting children away. Perhaps she has the segment of a tangerine or an open mussel in her fingers to soothe the bird. (When clients are astonished at the spectacle of a parrot enjoying *moules marinière* she cocks her head and says, iodine—maybe that's why he lives so long.) He will take the titbit and continue to grumble with quiet indignation to himself, while apparently listening acutely to all around him, for as suddenly as he flew into a rage he enters, unbidden across all the conversations, the clichés of his vocabulary over the clichés of theirs. —Santé cheers wha-tt! really? well-l so! so-oo ça va? come on! tu parles! love...ly bye now ça va?— All the nuances of hilarity, derision, irritation, disbelief, boredom are faithfully introduced, reproduced. The inflections of what must be called his voice adapt to whether he's having his say in French or English—it seems the advent of German and Scandinavian clients has not, in this latter part of his thirty years, enabled him to reproduce their locutions.

But now there's change coming to the charming village—of course it has kept its character through many changes, longer than the legendary longevity of a parrot. The revolution that sent the monks fleeing from their monastery whose cloisters are now the garden bar of its avatar as a five-star hotel; the German occupation in the 1940s in which young men of village families still extant (look at those baby carriages) were killed in the Resistance—there's a street where one was born, named after him. There has been the restoration of rotting beams in old houses by Scandinavians, Germans, and the English, who in the boom

years of Europe discovered a delightful unspoilt place to acquire an historic *maison secondaire*.

This latest change has a finality about it—as no doubt they all have had for whoever lived in or visited the village "as it used to be." Before. For each individual another "before." But one of the finalities, now, is the announced closing of the restaurant of the parrot. After thirty years! Madame Delancy knows she owes an explanation to the habitués, whether the survivors of the lesbian community from the twenties, the regular summer visitors, or the youngsters who take their right as a species of collateral grandchildren to sit smoking, jeering, and chattering for more than an hour over a single coffee or a shared ice cream. The chef, her dear husband who (everyone has heard related many times) learned his skills in the kitchens of Maxim's in Paris, has been cooking for more than forty years. For some while they have had a small apartment with a view of the sea, ready in preparation for this time that has come. So the tables with their white napery and flowers, the chairs on which everyone is at ease, raising glasses, all will be folded away, the ice buckets where bottles of Provençal Rosé are powdered with chill, and the chef's incomparable *Tarte Tatin* that is displayed among desserts—all will disappear. No. No? A German gentleman has bought the restaurant. As if one can "buy" a restaurant whose character has been formed over thirty years. A German. Sauerkraut and sausages. Or worse, something imagined as international French cuisine by those who are not French.

An imperious scream from under a bower. —Bon jour! Bon soir! Hullo! Ça va?—reminds: and Auguste, what will happen to the parrot? Can he be bought along with the premises?

The parrot will move to the apartment. What a question.

But there is a question: what life will it be for him, alone with an old couple gazing at the sea. Oh the family, the children and grandchildren will visit. Sometimes. Everyone has found other work.

The final week of the restaurant's life it is more fully patronised than ever. One must eat there just one time again, it's going to be the last time. For some people: of many phases, stages, stations of lifetime. The parrot has witnessed these; those that people remember, have forgotten, or want to forget. He is particularly talkative during his last chance of recollection declared; it seems that if the creature is long-lived, it also has a relentless memory. It is all there in whatever strange faculty is hidden in that feathered throat and blunt grey tongue behind the probing beak. He laughs the crescendo laugh of a coquettish woman who may or may not hear herself in it as she comes stooping on an invalid's walker to sit for one last lunch at her usual table. Now he's tittering nonsensically from the adolescence of girls who have disappeared into the cities; the parents, eating their ultimate *Daube Provençale*, haven't had news for months. The tittering sweeps away to a drunken blast (that poor devil, relic of former habitués, begs now outside the market). The murmur of lovers across a table (the hostile couple who don't exchange a word while they eat), the insinuating laugh of gossips whose predictions of mismatch and betrayal have come to pass, there—and someone smiling a farewell, cajoling Auguste, Auguste, turns away from the cage at lack of response, the creature has gone silent. He fidgets about the cage as if to find a bribe of sugar he has missed. But it's more than that. He yells anguish—PAPA PAPA PA–PAA! Where is that child from whom this cry came, and is stored, maybe for the rest of a hundred years? PA–PAA! Where is the father who was called for in desperate appeal, and did he ever come? HULLO HULLO PA–PAAA PA–PAAA! BON JOUR BON SOIR WHAT? WHAT? ÇA VA? ÇA VA? The parroting that isn't only that of parrots repeats how we hide from one another's hurts. ÇA VA?

How goes it?

And from the depths of whatever he has that mocks vocal cords, low and angry, there is what was overheard, what he shouldn't have overheard. *Ça ne va pas du tout.*

Doesn't go at all. ■


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HARPER'S MAGAZINE

# "IT'S NOT NEWS"

## What today's high school journalist is taught

*By Rich Cohen*



to the life of students; so out of touch with the true engine of any great newspaper, which is the simple human need for gossip.

Every school day the reporting staff of the paper meets for journalism class in a room in the basement of New Trier. These are mostly juniors, who, in addition to learning about nut graphs and leads and kickers and the inverted-triangle diagram that can be made of any proper news story, write an article for each week's edition of the paper. When I took the class, in the mid-1980s, we were also taught advertising. One assignment had us devise slogans for a dairy product and for the Devry Technical Institute, which, we knew from the commercials that interrupted *Bewitched* when we were home sick from school, would award a diploma through the mail. My slogans, in succession: EAT CHEESE, IT'S AN ADVENTURE and YOU EAT AT HOME, WHY NOT STUDY AT HOME? The class operates like one of those New Jersey flight schools: after a few months in the second seat, the kid gets his wings and buzzes away in his little Cessna. The most successful students go on, as seniors, to be the officers of the paper.

The class is currently taught by John Lucadamo, a white haired, red faced adult. He also teaches English and advises and oversees the newspaper in a Pinch Sulzberger capacity. This is his early retirement. For years he worked as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. When a student protests an assignment, usually on grounds of lameness, Mr. Lucadamo shows, on his overhead projector, a story he was assigned by an editor at the *Tribune* about a freakishly large pumpkin someone had grown in suburban Chicago. "And so here I was," Mr. Lucadamo tells the class, "a man in his forties, with a wife and a family, driving to look at a big pumpkin. But you know what? I gave the story respect. I treated it like it was a summit, and I came back with a nice little piece of journalism."

Mr. Lucadamo says each issue of the *News* should give a reader a sense of what it was like to be a student at New Trier that week. He says the paper is allowed tremendous freedom, giving, as an example, a story he published about a teacher accused of "fondling"—a word that made the hair on my neck stand up. Mr. Lucadamo talked about checking a van out of the motor pool, driving his students to court, watching the accused testify, and the meticulous care the class took to keep the name of the possibly fondled student secret. "Being fondled is not the kind of thing you want everyone to know about," he told me. "Fondling." In his time, Mr. Lucadamo claims to have encountered only one red line. It concerned PhotOpinion, a feature in which students, accompanied by their picture, give thoughts on an issue of the day. PhotOpinion was discontinued after a student responded to the question "What would you do about overcrowding at New Trier?" by saying, "Kill the freshmen," a joke considered unacceptable in the wake of Columbine. "In the picture, this kid was giving all kinds of gang symbols," said Mr. Lucadamo. "I didn't even know it."

In class each student talks about the progress he's made on his assignment. Reviews, editorials, sports stories. One kid is writing about terrorism—a bag of powder was recently found in the boys' bathroom, leading to an anthrax panic. There is a feature called Road Trip of the Week, which, because of the tight boundary thrown up by overly cautious suburban parents, rarely covers terrain beyond southern Wisconsin. Of these stories, my favorite was, simply, WONDERFUL SIGHTS SO HERE WE GO, IV. "Almost the moment we crossed the border into Wisconsin, we could sense the change from Illinois," it read. "Large glass business buildings with their own manicured golf courses were immediately exchanged for firework shops, and cheese curds after cheese curds."

Mostly I was interested in the kid. There had been, since my time, a burst of diversity, a tremendous change in shade and hue, as if someone had been playing with the knobs on the side of the TV set. And yet the students looked more alike than ever. This is, of course, a school where the students have always been said to look alike, dressing more uniformly than any code would require. Indian kids, Jewish kids, Asian kids, Arab kids, and old-timey Wasp kids, like cobblestone showing beneath tarry blacktop, united by something far stronger than ethnicity: the ambitions of their parents. It looked like the end of the dream—not the pursuit of happiness but its actual attainment, the big beast brought down by a massive accumulation of material. No less than the iPods they all seemed to carry, many of them filled with weak music, these kids were very much what the market had demanded.

At last, a kid stood up who looked like the kids I used to know, a memory not from my time but from my sister's, when kids used to gather late at night at the beach and race around in muscle cars, and orange was a good color—the burned out overall days of the mid-seventies. This kid was wearing torn jeans and a black concert shirt, and his face was your face before it was your face and his hair started normal and then flew away in back. But when I looked for the name of the band on the kid's shirt, I realized the name had been scribbled out, or was never there in the first place, that it was not really a concert shirt at all but an homage to the *idea* of the concert shirt, which means the kid was not really dressed like he was dressed but dressed like someone dressed like he was dressed, a muddy reflection of what had itself been a muddy idea the post Vietnam, post Watergate, post protest piece, the big brother thing that says, Aw, *I tell ya*.

The kid had run into trouble on his assignment.

"I was supposed to write about the new social studies teacher," he said. "And it's not working out."

Mr. Lucadamo: What's the problem?

Kid: I can't reach the guy.

Mr. Lucadamo: But that's your job, as a reporter.

*Mr. Lucadamo is not exactly a junior name. I know. I made it up. I'm sorry. I'll try to keep better track of what he's done—a development that had, for a while, called out of an uncomfortable if not complicated*

don't know what hospital.

Mr. Lucadamo: Write about the new math teacher.

That other thing, it's just not news.

The high school hallway, while being a road from here to there, is the field where you run and scurry, and we are all rats when the lights come on, and some doofus is pushed into his girlfriend against the lockers, the lucky bastard, and on the last day it's filled with loose sheets of paper and the dirty gum makes centuries of spent fireworks. It's a real place, the same in every school, as changeless and distinct as a casino floor in Vegas. No windows, no horizon, no memory of 500 fire pits beneath the reinforced security floor. Maybe it's why the hallway is both timeless and carries a trick of dimension: the loner and player, which is still a split in kids, matter and antimatter, this lover and that homophobe, wannabes. No daylight or hint of seasons. Just rushed. Even my class, the *outside* world, as seen through the window,

only place a student can expose his true nature free of mockery or violence. The members of each club, like the street gangs of old New York, have a neatly defined public persona. In the Math Club, kids wear high waters and short sleeves like the boys at Mission Control in Houston. In the Year Book, blonde bow heads smile and say, *Let's include this picture of Steve. He's really had an impact.* In The Simpsons Club, kids flinchy from too many walk-by charley horsings discuss Itchy and Scratchy. The kids at the News tend to be a mix—smart girls padding college applications, jocks interested in sportswriting, geeky boys interested in smart girls, gay students interested in jocks, other kids actually interested in newspapers, and glory chasers convinced a newspaper is a street-level door to the world of celebrity.

The staff meets during ninth period—the last period of school. There are desks along the wall of the office, dictionaries, bound volumes of old issues, and four or five computers on which stories are edited and the paper laid out. The staff sits around talking over the upcoming issue or working at the computers, helping the juniors, or dozing on the beat up old couch. When I visited, the *News* had two editors in chief: Joe Rosenberg and Clark DenUyl, who not only worked together but were also close friends. Together they made a fetish of classic rock, driving to distant arenas to see the Rolling Stones, the Moody Blues, any band that was big three moments before this moment. Clark is beefy and blond and laughs a lot, sucking extra spit into his mouth with a vacuum rush of air. Joe wears sandals and sweats to school and likes to sit on top of a filing cabinet, voice floating down from above. When I visited, he and Clark were sporting YES concert T-shirts. Joe was talking about a story he wanted to pursue. A few months before, a dead body had been found in the woods, and Joe wanted to write about it: who was it, how did he die, how was he found? When Joe mentioned this, all the editors started shouting opinions.

Finally, Mr. Lucadamo sighed and said, "It's not news."

"Why?" asked Joe.

"The kid wasn't a student at New Trier."

"He used to be," said Joe.

"No one cares."

"Everyone wants to know about it," said Clark.

"It happened too long ago to be news," said Mr. Lucadamo.

One of the editors turned to me. "What do you think? Do you think it's news?"

I said, "Yeah, a dead body in the woods sounds like news."

Mr. Lucadamo gave me that bugged-teacher look I remembered from high school. "Sorry," he said. "It's not news."

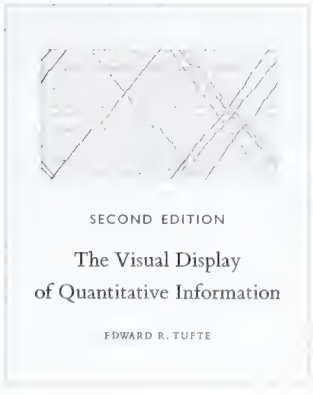
Joe Rosenberg is one of the reasons I wanted to write this story. I had been at New Trier the year before, and, when I walked with Joe through the halls, I was amazed by the ease with which he moved from group to group, like he was walking through a tunnel of hands. I thought, Yeah, this is what the life of a newspaperman should be: everyone convinced you're one of them, right up until the story breaks. Joe is gangly in a just-through-the-awkward-years way, features still wild and elastic but giving off a tremendous senior charisma, one of those kids who, okay maybe there were rough times, and sophomore year, the NCAA betting pool aside, is rough for everyone, but he had come through it, emerged, proved there are girls and beers even for the thinking man. As a freshman, looking to make a name, he had begun writing for the *Frosh/Soph Journal*, which, for the brainy New Trier mediaphiles, is the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* or *Dade County Sentinel*, the paper in the provinces where you cut your teeth. "Everyone was telling me, you have to find your niche," Joe said. "I thought it was going to be debate, but that did not work at all. So I started writing for the *Journal*, and I thought it was geeky at first but decided, okay, let's see where it takes me."

Joe was talking to me on the phone—I was in a hotel room in one part of the suburbs, he was in a house in another part, talking fast because he was getting ready to leave for a Guns N' Roses concert. In this, we were following the script of all high school friendships, face time in the hall followed by rambling exchanges on the phone.* Joe took journalism junior year, where, along with his friend Clark, he caught the attention of the senior editors and of Mr. Lucadamo. At the end of the year, he nominated himself to be the next editor of the *News*. There was an interview in a basement room, where he was questioned and teased by seniors, then he had the job. He soon realized a newspaper can be used as a weapon—to change the landscape, crusade. It was in this way that Joe, and co-editor Clark, wanted to go

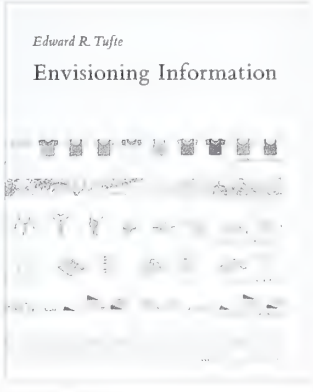
* *Later I got a phone call from Danny Mandel, boy reporter, doppelgänger. He had a number of questions, mostly about his time versus my time, and, sadly, in answering I found myself as canned and correct as a father on Career Day.*


# *Edward Tufte's books on analytical design (and essay on PowerPoint)*

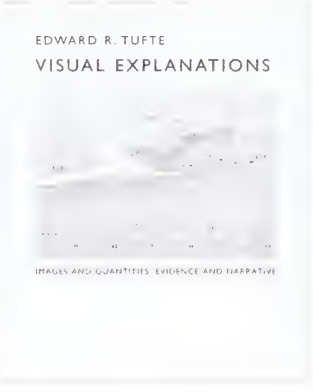
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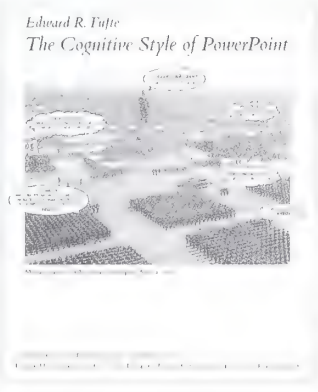

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compute the same trick—whole parts of the world are rendered "Not News."

One afternoon, I went to a room in the basement of the school where back issues of the *News* are stored. The paper has been published continuously since 1919, except for a brief stretch during the Depression, and I thought that if I looked through the entire run I might get a sense of how the paper has changed. The *News*, as it turns out, is a perfect mirror on the country, only it's convex, everything distorted and strange. In it you see the end of World War I: "We were excused from school and we went to the city of Chicago, where the cheering was deafening; where the hats were flying into the air; where great crowds swarmed." You see the last of the old America, the faith in institutions that built up after the Civil War. "If you are loyal to the school you will do more than cheer," reads an editorial from 1919. "You will play your part, you will back up all the projects of the school." You see the coming revolution. In 1920, New Trier was visited by an educational commission from China. "We had the idea that New Trier was just a high school in a country district," the commissioner told the *News*. "It was quite a surprise for us to find a modern school building with all the modern facilities. . . . But while these fortunate boys and girls in your school are enjoying the privileges of this fine institution, undoubtedly they also think of the less fortunate brothers and sisters."

In the fifties, with a feature that each week offered a sort of celebrity profile of a student, you sense the emergence of the modern America, which is the culture of personality:

> Dotsy Banker . . . can't stand oysters, herring, rock 'n' roll, Sunday night homework, social climbers, hot days, nasty rumors, and people who are always complaining and talking about themselves.
>
> Often called "the friendliest girl in New Trier," Elorse Eberhart is living proof of what a smile can do. . . . "Where did your get your dimple," is a question she says she has always disliked.
>
> Although Cam Avery admits that most girls are "quite confusing" he has definite ideas about his ideal girl. She

must have a fabulous personality and be "pint-size."

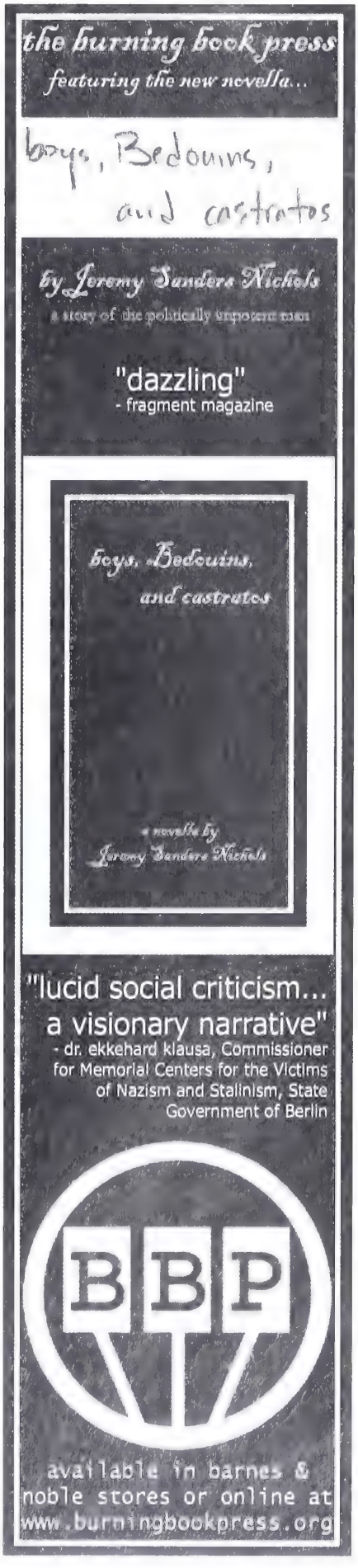
Julie Arnold says people who ooh and aah over her long hair and give her pony tail "such a hard yank it feels like my head is falling off" also annoy her.

Missy Cook believes Latin boys are very mature and smooth for their age.

The *News*, in other words, offered a picture of a complete world—the sixties, as experienced in the paper, is a process of tearing this picture apart. The first blow comes with the campaign to open the smoking area, a fenced-in yard where students can smoke without hassle, where, over time, they would construct a kingdom of cool. "Instead of patrolling the washrooms of the school, why doesn't New Trier take a realistic view of the situation and create a smoking room where students, if they have parental permission, can go and smoke in a complimentary atmosphere?" a student wrote in 1969. The area, as had been predicted, quickly led to harder stuff: MEDITATE ALL YOUR TROUBLES AWAY is a headline from that same year. Then the first narcs are on the scene, busting kids in the student lounge, and then there is the experiment in co-ed gym, and then the dress code is abolished: "Junior Jim Douglas doesn't mind girls wearing pants, but thinks whether or not they look good depends on the girl." In VISTA WORKERS TELL OF GHETTO EXPERIENCE, a student turns on his parents: "Integration is slow because you can't bring home a black brother to a white racist mother."

From there, decades flash by like laundry in a spin cycle. The seventies, with a piece called STUDENT ROCK BANDS JAM NT: "Over the years the high school rock tradition has been carried out by such named bands as Backwater, Orpheo, Spring Hill, Pegasus, Shattered Silence, Northern Comfort, Rhythm System, Pearl, Boko-Maru, Frion, and a host of others who never performed publicly." The eighties, the wilderness of Reagan, with a freaked-out student overreacting to a plan to have students sign pledges in an effort to clean up the student lounge. "To sign this card . . . is to throw away your soul," writes the student. "For those students who prefer the lounge to the patrolled stagnation of the library, there is no alternative and the card is signed. Student Alliance and the paraprofessionals now have you by the balls—if a piece of garbage falls anywhere in the lounge, no matter how disgusting its origins or how far digested, you must pick it up." The aughts, a sea change, with a renewed love of authority in the 9/11 era, the beatification of public workers, the very forces seen a few issues back ratting out kids: "Every student and staff member at New Trier are likely to notice parapros working throughout the school," reads a story. "But how many realize and appreciate the responsibilities that these individuals take on for those of us who attend New Trier every day?" We come full circle on career day, when a student from an earlier time turns up like old Rip Van Winkle, a relic from the unfathomable past: NT BEGETS A LONG-HAIRED HIPPY. "When you think of 100 year's worth of New Trier alumni, a list of lawyers, doctors, celebrities and CEO's comes to mind. . . . Mike Oehler, class of '56, is a self-proclaimed hippy." A picture of Oehler as a clean-cut senior runs alongside a picture of him today, scraggly as a prospector, a freakish warning to stay on the path.

The biggest changes are caught in the pages by accident, like bits of archaeology snagged in a fisherman's nets. In 1977, when the number of Jewish students began to climb, the paper ran a story called BAGELS INVADE NORTH SUBURBS, with a photo showing a criminal lineup of water bagels and egg bagels and dark-skinned pumpernickels looking like they'd been caught jumping the country-club fence. It happens that this story carries my sister's byline, but I can tell from the style that it was written by my father: "Back in the days before black was beautiful, before radical was chic, and before Bobby Vinton was Polish, a bagel was as revealing about a person's religious identity as a cross or a star of David." The story suggests a demographic shift both on the North Shore and in my own house, where

my sister had begun dating guys in pointed boots—well, just one guy, his name was Elliot—while my father managed an end run, pumping up her extracurriculars and so getting her safely away to college.

As I flipped through the volumes, browsing hundreds of stories, I gained a sense of the *News* as a vast project that each new class of reporters and editors added to, while remaining ignorant of the larger pattern—the reverse of that process whereby successive generations destroy something once considered too big for humans to touch. The way, in a few centuries, by common endeavor, the men who built the mansions along the North Shore wiped out the wildlife along the South Shore, polluting a lake that, to the Frenchmen who first charted it in canoes, seemed infinite. So here were high school students, working over the course of those decades that had remade their town and school, destroyed rules and codes, teaming with partners long since graduated or dead or else not yet born, building a monument bigger than anything that could be built by any one generation, or any two or three: a record of the nation as seen from a high school. It was like watching the country on a clear afternoon on a flight from New York to Los Angeles and seeing, from 30,000 feet, how all the roads and farms and plowed acres set amid what is still a terrifying wilderness actually do add up to one country.

When I worked on this vast project, the Pinch Sulzberger was Robert Boyle. He was a doctor of some sort, and made us call him that, though, in earlier issues, ten or twelve years before, he had been identified as "Mr." So you see, here is the *News* capturing, in a small way, a change that would come to mean a great deal in our lives—a change of one letter signifying all sorts of night classes, research papers, and dreams of academic glory. Dr. Boyle was, I think, the only openly gay teacher in the history of New Trier. He was gay in the way I came to expect from watching Mel Brooks movies—a neat goatee years before the return of the goatee, a black turtleneck, and eyebrows that, in their boomerang over his eyes, were as suggestive as the golden arches over McDonald's. He also taught English: one class for smart kids, another for regular kids, of which I was one. Each book he assigned was given a gay interpretation: In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlowe was heading up river to meet his gay lover, also his secret gay self. In *All the King's Men*, Jack Burden, in digging up secrets about his father, was plunging into and revealing his own terrible and beautiful secret. Dante, Proust, Melville, Poe. In one class, a girl named Leslie, who came from a strict Catholic family, and I knew this from asking her out, said, "Dr. Boyle, is it just me, or is everyone in every book homosexual?"

Dr. Boyle said, "It is just you. And if you look with an honest eye at most of the great literature of the West, you will find it shares a homoerotic theme."

On another occasion, Dr. Boyle began class by asking, "Do you still use the term 'tool' when referring to an erect penis?"

I dropped the class, not because I minded all the gay stuff but because Dr. Boyle did not like me. He said, "Mr. Cohen, you're not the smartest person in the world, but then again you don't pretend to be." In my new English class, taught by a sort of hippy (we spent one week on *Heart of Darkness*, four weeks on *Apocalypse Now*; when an important passage came up, he would say, "Conrad handles it well, but it's done much better in the movie") they were just starting *All the King's Men*, so I thought: gold mine. I already had pages of notes on the book. Each morning, I peppered the class discussion with insights—"Because he is gay," or "Can't you see that he is gay?"—that sent up manmurs in the back of the room. *What's up with Cohen?*

Dr. Boyle was not the sort of person I would have pegged for a newspaperman. I had been raised on the movies of my father's generation, the favorites being the newsroom comedies, the Frank Capra movies *Meet John Doe* and *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and *The Front Page* and its remake, *His Girl Friday*, each plot driven by the worldly, cynical, hard-drinking city editor. Only later did I learn that many of these characters, because they had been created by a handful of screenwriters, such as Herman Mankiewicz and Ben Hecht, who had worked to-reporters in newsrooms, were in fact based on one man, the ur-editor, William Randolph Hearst. A personification of the city, the ambulance chaser with an insatiable need to know. In *The Hudsucker Proxy*, the Coen brothers' paean to the genre, the editor sums up the mood and philosophy of the entire era: "I wanna know everything about this guy," he tells his reporters. "Has he got a girl? Has he got parents? . . . What're his hopes and dreams, his desires and aspirations? Does he think all the time or does he set aside a certain portion of the day? How tall is he and what's his shoe size? Where does he sleep and what does he eat for breakfast? Does he put jam on his toast or doesn't he put jam on his toast, and if not why not and since when?"

In these movies the editor embodies a philosophy no less convincing than the world-weary pose of Bogart—it's the hard-earned knowledge of how things really work. By the seventies this type had been remade in the image of Watergate heroes Woodward and Bernstein, appearing in movies like *All the President's Men*, then in TV shows like *Lou Grant*, where the original sense of fun was reborn as a crusade. But in old movies, the editor knows his job is to titillate and to entertain. The reporter is never center stage in such movies, serving instead to drive the action, in the process demonstrating the amoral worldliness suggested by the line Dr. Boyle used to read aloud from *All the King's Men*: "There are some kinds of a son-of-a-bitch you don't have to be even to be a newspaperman." Which implies there are some kinds of son-of-a-bitch you *do* have to be, and maybe it's even good and right to be that kind of son-of-a-bitch. It was this image that first sparked my interest in the press. The newspaper less as official record than as a way of managing the world, gathering

nd holding information, controlling the story.

So these were the ideas I had when signed up for journalism class, but, s I said, Dr. Boyle had taken a dislike o me, so when it came to being assigned a beat I was given the Ham Radio Club. Six kids in a field with a adio, trying to raise six other kids ust across the border in the land of heese castles. Later, when I was told o cover Tri-Ship, the boys' club that an the Christmas-tree sale, I broke a candal in my first week: a few days before, a janitor had found food in the Tri-Ship Club room. Food was verboten, and so, as a punishment, the lub was closed for one day. Members, for reasons I still can't figure, were told to keep quiet about the episode. But it was leaked to me by a nember who was upset by a double tandard: Evidence of food had also been found in the girls' Pep Club—an empty carton of Frusen Glädjé. No action was taken. "Now 'no eating' igns paper the walls," read my kicker. "Members want to know where it vill stop. 'Soon there will be no breathing signs.'"

When the story ran—BARTON EVICTS TRI-SHIP FROM OFFICE FOR ONE DAY—I was called out of class and brought to see Mr. Barton, a big, scary, square-jawed throwback of an administrator. Dr. Boyle was also in the office—it was like finding Bill Keller laughing it up with Paul Wolfowitz. The whole thing stunk. Mr. Barton said he wanted the name of my source. I told Mr. Barton what Dr. Boyle had told us in class: for a reporter, there is no obligation more sacred than protecting a source.

Mr. Barton said, "Cut the crap. This kid violated a trust."

I said, "Then how can you ask me to violate a trust of my own?"

Dr. Boyle leaned close and said, "Mr. Cohen. This is for real. We need the name."

The name? It was Matt Berns. He was a senior and had dark curly hair. On the last day of school, we drank beer and marveled at the fact that he would soon be in college. But I would not tell. There was arguing. Dr. Boyle said, "You have one more chance." I said, "I don't need it." Dr. Boyle apologized to Mr. Barton. I was taken back to class and suspended from the paper for three weeks. It was the most important lesson I learned in high school.

After final bell, when the halls had emptied of all but stragglers, the editors were in their office, like the last occupants of a bombed-out city, at computers, on the beat-up couch, closing the issue. It had been Eighties Day at New Trier: a big change in the culture of high school is the explosion of theme days, the use of the recent past as an arch comment on being arch. One kid was wearing a T-shirt on which he'd written SAVE FERRIS. On the way through the lounge, I found a fragment of a term paper written about the eighties called "A Go Go Decade." Because I found the whole thing embarrassing, I ignored it. Theme events have always made me uncomfortable, mostly because such events make even people who are not dressed up look like they're in costume. If he had come on Sixties Day, Mike Oehler, the old hippy, would've looked like just another kid with spirit.

A boy and a girl were on the couch, going over a story, then flirting, then wrestling, then groping. Noticing this, and noticing me noticing, Mr. Lucadamo, who'd been reading over shoulders, flushed and said to the boy, "That is no way to act in public. Sit up and act like a person."

The boy said, "Come on, Mr. Lucadamo, share the love."

Mr. Lucadamo said, "Why don't you share the maturity?"

The boy said, "I got maturity to spare."

Mr. Lucadamo said, "Outside."

A moment later, I saw Mr. Lucadamo's head in the window in the door. It was red and he was yelling. The boy came back in the room. "If I'm not needed here, I'm going home," he said. He grabbed his backpack and left.

Mr. Lucadamo then asked me to step outside. "I'm sorry you had to see that," he said. "We're trying to put out a newspaper and I've got that lunkhead in there and sometimes I feel like a baby-sitter."

"It sounds like the usual problems of a newspaper editor," I said.

He said, "Thank you very much for saying that."


***PEOPLE I MET HITCHHIKING ON USA HIGHWAYS***

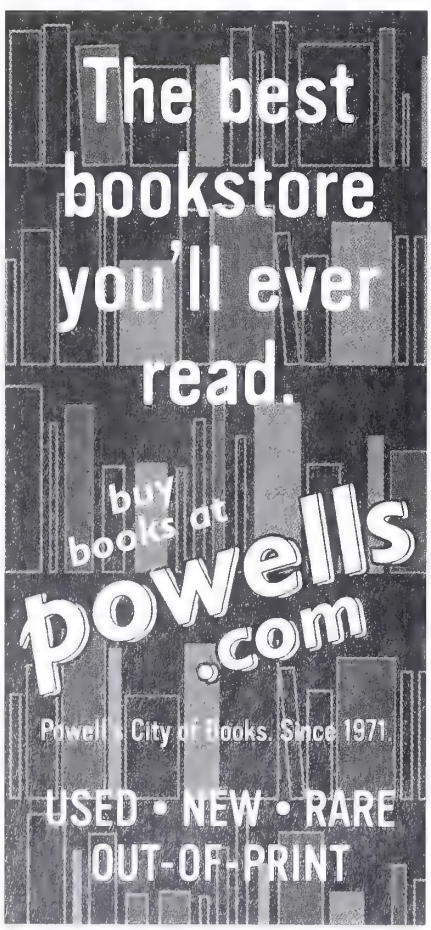
by ERIC CHAET

It surely matters who is elected federal, state, city, county, or town representative. Bush matters, & Reagan, Thatcher, & McCarthy mattered. So did FDR, Churchill, Hitler, Wilson, Lincoln, Polk, Clay, Jackson, Quincy Adams, Jefferson, Washington. Effects radiate from Mugabe, Mandela, Nehru, Juarez, Pitt, Pericles.

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When the newspaper had been put to bed, the editors talked about ideas for future issues. Mr. Lucadamo mentioned the upcoming football game between New Trier and Evanston. He wanted a story on the rivalry. A reporter would interview old students and faculty about the high jinks of days gone by. In 1986, Evanston had held a New Trier day: the students wore acid-washed jeans and penny loafers and drove their parents' fancy cars to school.

The editors liked this idea but wanted to run it with a profile of a student who, the year before, said he had found himself alone in Evanston, where he was set upon by a gang of spirited rowdies and "beat to a pulp."

This story had been pitched before, and Mr. Lucadamo responded with the special disdain all editors have for an idea that won't stay dead.

"No," said Mr. Lucadamo. "No no."

"Why?" asked Joe Rosenberg.

"Because no."

"Because why no?"

"It's not news."

"Why not?"

Mr. Lucadamo appealed to me with his eyes. I tried to show empathy, but I've always wanted to be liked more by kids than by adults. "Because it's not news," he said.

"But it happened," said Clark DenUyl. "We didn't make it up."

"But no one cares," said Mr. Lucadamo.

"But everyone knows this kid," said Joe.

"It's too old to be news," said Mr. Lucadamo.

"It happened before the last New Trier/Evanston game," said Clark.

Mr. Lucadamo was trying to steer the paper clear of incitement, of trouble, of the sort of reckless home-teamy journalism that fuels little wars and gets teachers fired. He [illegible] was basically accusing Joe and Clark of having a tabloid mentality. "No," he said. "It's not news." From here, the conversation evolved into a debate on the mission of the paper. Mr. Lucadamo saw it as a rag written by the school, a collection of leads and nut graphs and kickers [illegible] because they were young and still in the cluster-fuck world of kids, because they were much closer to that first illuminating spark of journalism, it had more to do with the great unexplainable need to know, the desire to probe and explore. For them, journalism was coming back from a baseball game and telling everyone what happened; literary journalism was telling everyone what it was like; and investigative journalism was a bunch of kids standing near the crazy old lady's house, a house that is rumored to be filled with vintage board games, saying, "Can we sneak someone in there to get a look?"

Of all the pieces Joe had written, his favorite was the story about the chambers under the school. That is, Joe —and this is why he is a true journalist—crossed one of the last sacred frontiers in America, sneaking, with a notebook and a digital camera, from the gossipy, test-taking world of the students into the workingman's world of the janitors, a world of pumps and plants and break rooms, where, smoking and swearing in Spanish, the janitors tell bawdy tales in storerooms as vast as those of old King Herod, among furnaces and big whirling Sheeler-esque generators that keep the mad prison chugging through the winter. It's a world that I, too, was fascinated by as a student. And yet, because it never occurred to me that you could actually go there—I would've chickened out at the last minute anyway—it remained imaginary: as colorful and unreal as a scene in a pirate movie, a gleeful debauch set amid a shower of sparks. Joe offered to take me down there, and so we went, crossing a line as carefully regarded as the line between advertising and editorial. Out of the office, down a long hall, into a nondescript room, and through a low metal door. We emerged in a forest of pipes, humming and clicking, throwing off heat, the hammering underbelly of the school. It was like a picture of Earth taken from the moon. The hassles of the everyday world drifted away. We spotted a janitor in the distance, hundreds of yards away, and yet in strangely sharp resolve, as if seen in the deep focus of Orson Welles, his mouth turned down, worrying his adult worries. "Here," said Joe, pulling me around a corner. We were standing before a vast chugging tank.

Joe said, "We are underneath the pool."

I saw myself twenty years before, in a Speedo, in line with thirty other kids, each of the girls in a clingy one-piece. We would hug and grind in the shallow end, then stand exposed. I would stare at the wavery depths, at the lane numbers on the bottom of the pool, burning my eyes into the number eight, the symbol of infinity, the biggest thing in the world, plus one, the only idea big enough to stem the creeping blood flow—"Do you still use the word 'tool' when referring to an erect penis?"—the news of which, if it gets out, and please don't let it get out, would flash through school and change my life. And all the while I floated unknowingly above floor upon floor of pipes and generators, tricks of engineering and noise. The goal of journalism: to pan out, to expand the context, to peek beyond the border at the edge of the photograph. It's a great story, Joe, because—well, I guess, if you go deep enough, it's true of every story—it exists both as what it is (information on how the school actually works) but also as a metaphor, the goal of the search, which, although most reporters get distracted by the kid with the boner, is to expose those depths, those hidden pipes and pumps. Joe had pierced the bubble, made it backstage, visited the basement in Macy's where they torture the shoplifters, found the drunk tank beneath Disneyland. Then a janitor spotted us. He rushed over. He looked angry. Just as he was about to let Joe have it, he noticed me. An adult complicates. I was like a U.N. blue helmet. The janitor nodded at me, turned to Joe, and said, "All right, kid, you've had your fun. Now beat it." ■

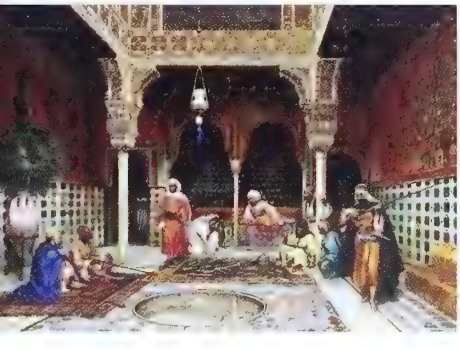
*When, weeks after I had left New Trier, Danny Mandel's article arrived in the mail, I understood that I had added my own image to the procession of ghostlike, lesson-giving grads. Under the headline* LITERARY ALUM REVISITS HIS NEW PAST *was a story in the perfect shape of an inverted triangle. Toward the beginning it read, "Rich Cohen went to New Trier High School from 1982–1986 before half the current student body was born." At the end I was quoted as saying that my generation is now "'starting to really contribute' in America."*



# NEW BOOKS

*By John Leonard*

Not counting a genetic predisposition to sing tenor and drink rye, the only gift I ever got from my father was a boxed edition of Washington Irving's *The Conquest of Granada*. I had to cut the pages myself, which was so much fun that I went on immediately to *Tales from the Alhambra*. No wonder I dreamed for years





of Arab poets floating like ghosts among blue mosaics and singing like birds in the aviaries of the caliph. But this was before I had ever been to Spain, or read Richard Fletcher.

Fletcher, a retired professor of medieval history at the University of York, specializes in relations between Christianity and Islam on the Iberian Peninsula. He first thumped me on the head with *The Quest for El Cid*, a book as skeptical of the epic's hero as it is of any romanticizing of the Moors he was supposed to have driven back to Africa. It seems that when these pashas weren't poisoning one another, they had to fend off invasions by fundamentalists from Morocco who felt they'd gone soft in their honeycomb domes. And when the Andalusians needed military help, they had to get on the horn to guys like Rodrigo (a.k.a. El Cid). Rodrigo, a mercenary sword for hire, would be glorified into El Cid by old soldiers, telling tall tales; by poets, needing a Christian hero; by historians, pushing a pious royalism; and by his hometown, wanting a tourist attraction. All that stuff about his corpse propped up in a saddle to look like Charlton Heston, leading the troops to Holy War? Lies.

After *El Cid* came Fletcher's *Moorish Spain*. Much as I'd like to believe the Islamic presence in southern Spain, from 711 till 1492, was more civilized than Spain perhaps deserved, the evidence is otherwise. Córdoba's glory, and Granada's, and Seville's, depended on ransom, tribute, and slaves. Just like the Christian princelings of Aragon and Castille, warrior aristocracies pillaged one another's city states. People who are soft on Moors, said Fletcher, are nostalgic for a mythical Eden—the "August pomegranate" of Andalusia. To this nostalgia we've added a dash of Anglo-Saxon Protestant prejudice against Spanish Catholicism and a sprinkle of twentieth-century guilty-liberal dandruff about the evils of colonialism, even though the Moors themselves were conquistadores. Couldn't we just be grateful that they gave us watermelons, artichokes, spinach, and paper; that they preserved for us the secrets of Aristotle, Euclid, and Hypatia; that their advanced philosophy, geometry, astronomy, optics, and medicine would make it possible for Aquinas to prove the existence of God, for Newton to fall into gravity, and for Dante to go to Hell?



Now, in a tabloid world bullied to believe that two great religions are once again at each other's throats, Fletcher in THE CROSS AND THE CRESCENT: CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM FROM MUHAMMAD TO THE REFORMATION (Viking, $22.95) undertakes to brief us on how ignorant of each other those religions have chosen to be. "Attitudes laid down like rocks long ago continue to shape their moral environment for many centuries thereafter," he notes. "There is a geology of human relationships which it is unwise to neglect." Christianity simply couldn't imagine Islam as anything other than a heresy. Islam, while revering the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, found notions like the Trinity ridiculous. Briskly, then, Fletcher escorts us from A.D. 632, when the Prophet died, all the way to the fifteenth century, the Gutenberg Bible, and the fall of Granada. It is a dazzling

Detail of an angel from *Ascent of Muhammad to Heaven on Buraq, Guided by Gabriel and Escorted by Angels*, Safavid dynasty, 1539–43 (top) © Art Resource, New York City; *Gunsmiths at the Palace of Alhambra, Granada*, by Filippo Baratti, 1878 (left) © Christie's Images/CORBIS; Photograph of Islamic tiles © Gérard Degeorge/CORBIS (right); Illustration of El Cid, 1552 © AKG-Images

Constantinople, Sunnis and Shi'ites; the fall to the Saracens of Damascus, Alexandria, Tripoli, Carthage, Toledo, the triumph of the Almohads, the birth of Baghdad, Timbuktu, Sicily, the rise of Venice, Dhimmitude, Crusades, Mamluks, Saladin, Saladin; Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides, Genghis Khan, and Prester John.

Between, say, Barcelona and Timbuktu, there's a pretty big patch of terra incognita. Opium, silkworms, and gunpowder, for the Byzantines failed to notice anything odd going on in Medina in the seventh century, so the Ottomans weren't looking when the West in the fourteenth century invented credit, banking, marine insurance, and mercantile hegemony. Muslim autocrats usually tolerated Christian subjects so long as taxes got paid, but sometimes they forgot. Christians and Muslims side-by-side in Spain weren't a multiculture if sexual relations between them were punishable by death. For every curious text Fletcher has located—from the autobiography of Usamah ibn Munqidh, who deplored the way Christians let their women run around, to the travel memoirs of William of Rubruck, the first European ever to describe cavalry—there were hundreds of abusive polemics. And instead of improving since, our respectful understanding of the Other may even be said to have regressed. At least Dante placed Saladin in Limbo, in the company of such virtuous non-Christians as Homer and Plato. Ann Coulter is not so generous.



Fletcher apologizes for omitting Jews from *The Cross and the Crescent*; including them would have complicated his task immeasurably. But, of course, relations between Islam and Judaism are as intractable as anything Toledo or Granada ever saw. [illegible] (Verso, $20) asks us to stop thinking about architecture as an autonomous process. At least in Israel it has a political, even a military purpose, like archaeology. "Space," we are told by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, the editors of this anthology of angry essays, photographs, and maps, "becomes the material and ultimate frontier of the conflict, considered as much as the landscape in the construction of roads, hilltop settlements, development towns and garden suburbs." In fact this book is a second printing of a censored catalogue to a canceled exhibition originally intended for the 2002 congress of the Berlin Union Internationale des Architects but deemed by the Israel Association of United Architects to have been way too Peace Now.

From the first wall and tower of the first kibbutz; to the 1950 master plan for housing new immigrants, populating borderlands to stabilize the 1948 cease-fire lines, resettling deserted Arab villages, and establishing transit camps and agrarian outposts; to the post-1967 West Bank settlements that were supposed to enhance national security but constitute instead what the political geographer Oren Yiftachel calls an "ethnocratic and/or colonial expansion"; to the post-1977 occupation of the mountain ridges of Judea and Samaria by the "white colonies" of Gush Emunim, for reasons as much strategic as they are mystical; to the unlawful seeding of such summits as "Hill 777" and "Hill 851" with "temporary" outposts in the form of mobile homes—space has been organized, fortified, and militarized, populations redistributed according to class and national origin, the desert ideologized, and the Palestinians evicted.

To be sure, we've always had castles and moats. The walled cities on the islands of the Adriatic were the West Bank settlements of their Turk-fearing time. But *A Civilian Occupation* recalls for us a militarizing of urban space closer to home—what Mike Davis in *City of Quartz* called "the architectural policing of social boundaries" and "the carceral semiotics of ramparts and enclosements." As in Israel, so in L.A.: surveillance towers, citadels and pedestrian tourist-bubble theme parks and panopticonic shopping malls, residential enclaves like hardened missile silos and libraries like dry-docked dreadnoughts. All of which dovetails nicely with the pacification of the poor, the human landfill, in strategic-hamlet housing projects, Bantustans, and Bedouin encampments.

Havana in 1970 must have been a similarly suffocating experience for Alma Guillermoprieto, whose DANCING WITH CUBA: A MEMOIR OF THE REVOLUTION (Pantheon, $25) is as much a pleasure as an astonishment. Who knew that the nonpareil reporter on Latin America for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books* had started out at age twelve in Mexico as a modern dancer, studied in the sixties in New York with both Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, enlisted (between waitress jobs, Japanese movies, Janis Joplin, and Jean-Claude van Itallie) in Twyla Tharp's Central Park road show, and then, just short of her twenty-first birthday, imprudently signed up to teach modern dance to high school students in Castro's Cuba? It's almost as if she left New York to escape her doubts about her men and her feet.

So we get dancing, teaching, politics, and loneliness; good hearts, gay friends, bad faith, timid art, and mediocre food; a sugarcane harvest and much speechifying. She accuses herself of bourgeois individualism and art-brat self-pampering, but she is rightly suspicious of ideologues at the school, apparatchiks in the ministries of culture, international friendship delegations that never get out of the luxury hotel, and the joblessness in store for her students. She tries and fails to construe the charismatic mystery of Fidel, cohabits casually with a guerrilla, and writes letters worthy of D. H. Lawrence in Sardinia or Rilke in Paris. She will be politicized to the extent of feeling ashamed about the United States in Vietnam, but also disenchanted with a Cuban revolution so paranoid and narrow-minded that it decided the Mexican anthropologist Oscar Lewis was a spy. And her best Havana friends, the ones she ran rings around in the moonlight, spinning and laughing till the eclipse, would eventually be forced to leave by motorboat for Key West from the port city of Mariel. ■

# AND THEN HE WAS GONE

## The unfinished life of Weldon Kees

*By Jed Perl*

Discussed in this essay:

*Vanished Act: The Life and Art of Weldon Kees*, by James Reidel. University of Nebraska Press, 2003. 418 pages. $35.

A what-might-have-been fascination hovers around Weldon Kees, the dark-eyed, dapper author who cut a swath through the arts in mid-twentieth-century America. Kees was forty-one when he leapt to his death from the Golden Gate Bridge in 1955. Although the reputation he had made among his contemporaries—with his poetry and fiction and criticism, and with his enthusiastic exploits as a jazz pianist and an abstract painter—has never solidified into anything that can be called enduring renown, neither has that reputation ever been erased. James Reidel's biography, *Vanished Act*, is the latest installment in an ongoing search for the truth about Kees. How good a poet was he? What of his short stories? Are his paintings significant? Why did he kill himself? Or, considering that he left no note and that his body was never recovered, is it possible that Kees did not kill himself but instead left his car near the Golden Gate Bridge and vanished, taking up a new life? (There were even reports, filtering back to the United States over the years, that he had been spotted in some Mexican town, playing ragtime on an upright piano in a tiny café.)





The story of Weldon Kees is not so much one of an achievement as it is the story of an aspiration and its afterglow. The man has a dusky, flickering allure. Moving through the avant-garde exuberance of postwar New York, Provincetown, and San Francisco, this hardworking writer and artist who had grown up in Nebraska carried himself with a professional polish, a seriousness. He published three volumes of poetry—*The Last Man*, *The Fall of the Magicians*, and *Poems 1947–1954*—the first two to considerable critical acclaim. He was a comer, spoken of in the same breath with Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop. He wrote for the great little magazines of the period, and his became a familiar byline in *Prairie Schooner*, *Horizon*, *The Kenyon Review*, *New Directions*, *Poetry*, *Partisan Review*, *Diogenes*, *Chimera*, *Furioso*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Botteghe Oscure*, and *Tiger's Eye*. Almost as soon as Kees began to produce elegant abstract paintings, he was showing at the Peridot Gallery in Manhattan, a significant venue for avant-garde art. And when Clement Greenberg stepped down from his post as art critic at *The Nation*, Kees was his successor. Yet Kees had a tendency to back off from his achievements: after establishing himself in New York he seemed to want an escape from the very artistic and literary world in which he now had a place, and he left New York for San Francisco. There a Barbary Coast experimentalism in painting, poetry, and film was taking hold amid the amusing Victorian gingerbread houses where you could still live on the cheap.

With his slicked-back hair and carefully clipped mustache, Kees was said to have the looks of a literary-world Tyrone Power. When photographers came near, he was quick to strike a pose, and there is so much narcissistic intensity about those camera studies that it is easy to believe Kees regarded himself as a matinee idol taking his appointed role in the drama of the bohemian 1950s. Turning the pages of *Vanished Act* in which Reidel describes the New York parties that Kees attended in the 1940s, the protagonist of this story sometimes seems in danger of

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Photograph of Weldon Kees and his painting *The W* courtesy Gallery: Gertrude Stein

group of supporting players, which includes Mary McCarthy, Edmund Wilson, Philip [illegible] and Dwight Macdonald. Kees's own letters [illegible] full of dense [illegible] chaotic gatherings, and his [illegible] spell of [illegible] conversation [illegible] trying-to-top-ev[illegible] tee. At one party, McCarthy is explaining "who the real heroine of *The Golden Bowl* is," but Kees never finds out because Natalie Raby was telling me, rather irritably, what all was wrong with Dwight Macdonald." Meanwhile "an argument about the proper way to pronounce Randall Jarrell's last name" has broken out, and Edmund Wilson explains that the accent is on the last syllable and then goes on to argue that Jarrell is "essentially an adolescent and only interesting in his poetry when he is working off his infantile obsessions."

Kees's small but fervent band of admirers, although never making outlandish claims for this man who interests them so much, are perhaps a little too protective of the natty author, whose literary remains suggest the kind of complex, craftsmanlike intelligence that is needed to create major art but never quite the sharpness or urgency of the thing itself. The range of Kees's work reflects a man who felt very keenly the pull of divergent media and styles, and his variegated achievement never crystallizes into a singular sensibility. He wrote dense yet succinct poems and dryly realistic short stories, and painted suavely formal abstract compositions; he was also a serious jazz pianist, who composed his own songs, performed in public, and probably could have made a career in music. Poets, who are among his staunchest admirers, are quick to praise the easygoing mastery in his evocations of places and moods—bright beaches, creaky old houses, late summer days and autumn evenings. Certainly there is beauty in some of Kees's descriptions of the natural world, as in the poem "Land's End":

> A day all blue and white, and we
> Came out of woods to sand
> [illegible]
> gulls.

And in "Travels in North America" he is good at evoking the Bay Area mood, with the "forgotten yellow lights of San Francisco coming on,/The bridges choked with cars, and islands in the fog."

People who remain undecided about exactly who they are or what they want to do can be maddening to know, but they can also charm us with their very confusions, if their confusions are animated by a charismatic energy. A friend of Kees's, the novelist Anton Myrer, described him as "a bundle of fascinating anomalies." Myrer and his wife, the painter Judith Rothschild, spent time with Weldon and Ann Kees in Provincetown at the end of the 1940s. Weldon Kees is the model for one of the central characters in Myrer's first novel, *Evil Under the Sun*, which remains a powerful account of the circle of artists and writers who gathered around Hans Hofmann and his great school, where talented painters seemed to have a way of becoming, at least for a time, inspired ones. Myrer was struck by the seemingly contradictory strains in Kees. "His esthetic sensibilities," Myrer recalled in a letter, "were almost Proustian, and yet he loved to see himself as a 1930s tough guy, a kind of Zachary Scott-Barton MacLane blend. He could—and did!—drink with the best of them, but his manners could be almost courtly on occasion; and he would not stand for boorishness or bad manners."

To friends, Kees's unflappable elegance could sometimes seem a way of not letting people approach, and part of what was anomalous about him was the mismatch between his ebullience and his reticence. They were often bemused by his wife, Ann, a very shy woman, a heavy but quiet drinker, who seemed ill at ease in the social whirl that Kees enjoyed. And some speculated that Kees had strong, unfulfilled homosexual longings. Regardless, he and Ann did not fall in and out of other people's beds in a way that was more or less expected within some of the circles where they moved.

James Reidel's biography is full of the frustrated, sometimes baffled reports of friends who felt that they never quite got to know Weldon Kees, and in the wake of his apparent suicide their bafflement grew. Pauline Kael, who at the very beginning of her career took part in "Behind the Movie Camera," a public-radio program Kees had organized, remarked that in the last months of his life he was "slack & lethargic & miserable. . . . It was as if a dynamo had suddenly run down." This image of the steely dynamo, powerful yet somehow alien, is very much an aspect of the coolness, the impenetrability that mystified people. If he seemed beyond reach, it was in part because he had created connections with people that made them want more; and indeed what still attracts people to Kees is his hunger, his avidity, his roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-down-to-work style.

Kees was one of those bright young people who, in the postwar years, turned the kind of organizational skills that in the 1930s would have gone toward union or political work into new forms of artistic collaboration. In Provincetown during the summer of 1949, Kees organized Forum 49, a series of events and exhibitions devoted to painting (with Abstract Expressionists such as Hans Hofmann and Adolph Gottlieb speaking), as well as to theater, film, architecture, and poetry. Dwight Macdonald gave a lecture on "The Dream World of the Soviet Bureaucracy." Kees planned the programs, supervised publicity, and at openings played his rare jazz recordings of Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, and Bessie Smith. A couple of years later he was at it again in San Francisco, organizing Poets' Follies, a mélange of poetry, jazz, burlesque, and satire, in which he managed to persuade the most famous stripper in Oakland, Lily Ayers, to take part. (The extraordinarily elegant broadsides were printed in letterpress by Adrian Wilson, who also printed Kees's last volume of poems.) Myrer suspects that Kees at times "saw himself as a kind of latter-day Ezra

Pound (whom he deeply admired for his poetry and critical brilliance)—lending critical assistance to aspiring writers, supporting local theater and printing projects, writing for amateur musicals."

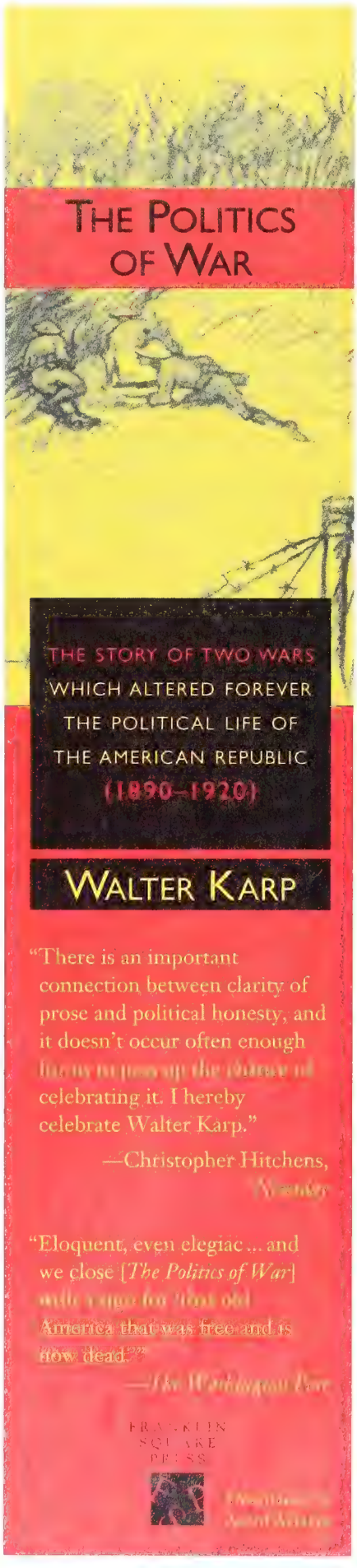
Kees's work at Forum 49 in Provincetown prefigured the kinds of meetings organized by the Artists' Club in New York in the 1950s, and the Poets' Follies recalls other theatrical exploits, such as the Poets' Theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Artists' Theater in New York, which mounted plays by John Ashbery and James Merrill. The postwar avant-garde had a flair for eclectic experimentation and a taste for "fascinating anomalies," and Kees was hardly the only person who combined elements of the tough guy and the Proustian aesthete. True, many of the people Kees came in contact with placed a higher value than he did on improvisation, spontaneity, and the shattering of artistic conventions, but to get involved in the great adventure of modern art and literature was by its very nature an affirmation of the past. The generation of painters and poets who arrived in New York after the war, through the act of aligning themselves with modern experimentalism, were casting their lot with a story that was by then at least seventy-five years old; even as these younger artists and writers were anxious to break with convention, they were also, and sometimes in a very concious way, involved in an avant-garde tradition.

In the richly tangled history of art-for-art's-sake during the postwar years, younger artists and writers could be attracted, sometimes almost simultaneously, by the Dadaist nihilism of Duchamp, who was living in New York and who was becoming something of a guru, and the classicism of Stravinsky and Balanchine. Balanchine's *Agon*, which had its premiere at the New York City Ballet in 1957, is a reimagining of a suite of Baroque dances in twelve-tone form and suggests that the way to the future involves a reach into the past—an idea that might have earned Kees's approving comment, in one of his poems, that "the work is classical in form. *Mit Kraft*." Even the games of high-and-low comparison that were beginning in the postwar years could have a classical twist, for Kees's tastes in popular art tended toward what might be described as a search for the classical spirit within the populist context. When it came to jazz, Kees was most interested in the earliest periods, in New Orleans jazz and ragtime; he believed that the improvisations of bebop were a terrible falling off, which he explained in a *Partisan Review* essay called "Muskrat Ramble: Popular and Unpopular Music." As for his taste in movies, the enthusiasms that he voiced to his friends make it clear that although he enjoyed rubbing shoulders with the experimental film movement taking off in San Francisco in the years he was living there, what Kees really loved was the professional polish of the Hollywood studios in their halcyon days.

On the great question of whether the essential vitality of art inheres in chiseled form or raw feeling, Kees was surely on the side of form, which no doubt helps to explain the warmth of his friendship with Hofmann, that classicist among the Abstract Expressionists. There is much to admire in Kees's sense of craft, in his feeling for the precision of a line, in the simplicity of his language, as in the opening stanzas of "The Darkness":

> I have seen it in the green tree
> For a long time now,
> In the shapes on pavements, oiled
>
> And streaked with rain, and where
> Hands have touched at doors.

In Kees's strongest poems you feel the penetration of those dark eyes of his, which were looking out at the world and bringing back some savory impressions in a simplified, sharpened form. Kees can hit on a striking image, such as when, describing a wintry landscape, he writes of "the parodies of buildings in the snow." And yet Kees's polished effects often close down the very emotions that they are meant to intensify. The result is a slight anonymity that muf-



flesh most of his work, an uncertainty that his staunchest supporters may see as an aspect of his classicism but that I would put down to his inability to stamp the work strongly enough with a unique fingerprint.

When we consider the unsteady but still living reputation that Kees has today, it is surely not insignificant that much of the strong advocacy for his work has come from writers, such as the poets Dana Gioia and Donald Justice, who are often associated with a belief that the meanings in art are strengthened by a loyalty to traditions, to older ideas of form. Yet a criticism of Kees can be made from the very vantage point of tradition, for there is sometimes a sense in which the poems fail to rivet us on their own, that it is the poet and not the poem that holds us. In his introduction to the *Collected Poems*, Justice observes: "the poetry of Kees makes its deepest impression when read as a body of work rather than a collection of isolated moments of brilliance." But isn't what we want from a poet precisely those "isolated moments of brilliance," those rapturous lines? Perhaps Justice's desire to embrace "a body of work" is a way of avoiding the specific instances where Kees reaches for overt emotions and the emotions feel forced, artificial—as when Kees describes "Grasping at nothing in a swirl of leaves," and the "nothing" is just a hollow pose. In more elaborate compositions, such as "The Hourglass," the rhythms can bring modern classics, in this case passages from Eliot's *Four Quartets*, all too rapidly to mind:

> A series of dusks, gray,
> Blown like chimney smoke
> And edged with lavender,
> Descend, foregathering.

Poetry engaged Kees's most serious energy in his later years, and this is the strongest of his literary work—stronger, certainly, than the fiction, much of which is forced and flat. There is one striking story, a late one, "The Purcells," in which we see, through the astonished eyes of a small-town boy, the self-indulgent extravagance of an immensely wealthy woman, her shopping orgies, her drug problem, and the blind rage that kills her when she discovers that her husband is besotted with a cheap, silly girl; and how, after her death, the strange, aimless, rather dull pleasure-seeking goes on, as Mr. Purcell lives with the young woman and her husband. I cannot agree, however, with Dana Gioia's rather high estimate of Kees's short stories, in which Gioia sees "force and memorability" and impressively "savage" effects. With the exception of "The Purcells," there is little in the stories to hold our attention, and *Fall Quarter*, a novel about college life published posthumously, is similarly pale. The stories often refer back to Kees's early days, as a boy in Beatrice, Nebraska, and then as a young man in Lincoln and Denver, where he worked in a library. Next to nothing happens, and what does happen feels staged, in a condescending, these-are-the-travails-of-little-people kind of way. A young, shy librarian receives no recognition for a bright idea about how to keep readers out of an off-limits area; an old man struggles weakly against the steely control of his spiteful daughter-in-law: each detail is rendered with the sort of cautious, craftsmanlike manner that might gain praise in a creative-writing class, but there is no heat, no pulse, no liberating eccentricity.

There is too much of the classroom about Kees's work in general, too much of a sense of a job well done. This is surely a problem in his paintings. The biomorphic forms are realized with quickening textural effects and an easy mastery of the brush; they are striking and attractive works, sturdy examples of a kind of abstract painting that appeared with a good deal of frequency in the circles around Hofmann's school. You may admire these paintings, but it is difficult to avoid the impression that Kees's handsome compositions, with their looming enigmatic shapes that have the character of anonymous figures, are, to an almost weird degree, emanations of a period style. What may at first seem a principled conservatism in Kees's work can later on look like a timid conventionality. With Kees, the feeling for tradition can degenerate into a mere traditional attitude, and this is also a problem in the series of poems he published in *The New Yorker* that describe the life of a city dweller known simply as Robinson. These compositions, about the loneliness of modern urban experience, caused quite a stir when they were first published in the late 1940s, but Robinson is little more than a wan existentialist conceit. We see the sad sack "at cards at the Algonquin," "on a roof above the Heights," or "afraid, drunk, sobbing." He walks the streets. And we observe him from a certain distance, as he carries his "sad and usual heart, dry as a winter leaf." These bathetic poems give to a cluster of familiar images of urban alienation the slickness of a *New Yorker* cover.

Whereas the melancholy of the Robinson poems is pretentious and unconvincing, the sadness of Weldon Kees's life is altogether real. His immense energy and esprit make his collapse seem all the more devastating. Here is a man who was absolutely engaged with life, and in the end his friends were left confounded. Weldon and Ann were divorced by the time he died, and she seemed mostly indifferent to his end; she soon lost touch with just about everybody they had known. Kees's parents, a wealthy, cultivated couple who closely followed the career of their extraordinary only child, were left clinging to the hope that he might still be alive and encouraging the interest of a younger generation of writers who discovered their son's few published books or were interested in examining his yellowing manuscripts.

James Reidel does not attempt to make the story any happier than it is. He frames his biography with images of the ones who were left behind. At the beginning he describes Kees's mother, an old woman in a retirement home, and at the end he relates the confusion of Kees's friends after his disappearance and their efforts to understand his suicide (or, if in fact he was still alive, to figure where he had gone). Reidel is right to give the book a novelist's mood-setting

ouches, and he is right to have haped the account in terms of the laces where Kees lived, with long ections on Nebraska, New York, rovincetown, and San Francisco. et in the end this remains a conentional biography, an attempt to ep back and let the life tell itself, nd Kees cannot fill the span of the ages. The trajectory of the story—om a childhood in small-town Neraska to a glittering postwar New ork—is large, even epochal, and ne very history of the period has a ay of overwhelming the protagoist; Kees remains shadowy, a ghost n his own biography. At times it eemed that Reidel simply did not ave enough material to work with, o that some of his sources ended up eing pushed too hard—one person's mpressions of Kees's sexuality, for xample, are given more importance nan they deserve. And Kees's poetry nd stories and paintings are not set rmly enough in the context of what ther writers and artists were doing round the same time.

To write the biography of an enigna is a daunting task. The author eeds to be a considerable literary alent in his own right, and he needs o find a way to convey some essenial affinity with his elusive subject. A biography of Kees that succeeds ight resemble in some respects the tudy of Frederick Rolfe, also known s Baron Corvo, the strange nineeenth-century author of a series of maginative histories and fictions, vhom the English bibliophile A.J.A. ymons presented in all his mysterius glory in the 1934 classic *The Quest for Corvo*. Near the end of hat book, Symons observes that Corvo's "twisted career so sharply nded prompts questions which the visest cannot answer. There is no asy explanation of genius or talent: hey exist and we accept them as acets of creative force. Some meaure of artistic power or sensibility is nherent in all humanity." Similar onundrums float around the art and ife of Weldon Kees, and a biographr should not even attempt to anwer these unanswerable questions. t would be better, instead, to follow ymons's method in *The Quest for Corvo*, where what we are offered is not so much a biography as an investigation that is conducted in the prop room of the man's life, a sort of assessment of the available evidence—which yields, eventually, a haunted, spectral portrait.

So let us turn to a copy of the first edition of Kees's last book, *Poems 1947–1954*. Published by Kees's friend, the printer Adrian Wilson, the book is hardbound, in boards that are covered in a handmade paper of variegated, soft-edged stripes that look batiked, in delicate browns and reds that suggest a muddied sunset. The poems are printed on thick, yellowish paper, with the edges of the pages cut rough. On the title page the black letterpress type is accented with a brown hourglass, apparently printed with a Linotype image from some turn-of-the-century printer's hoard. And there are also a few lines from Hawthorne's *Marble Faun*, alluding to "those dark caverns into which all men must descend." This finely printed volume, which contains some of the best lines Kees ever wrote, suggests a scrupulous, quietistic bohemianism, the poet and his printer friend together making the beautiful book. To summon up in the pages of a biography this life that ended close to fifty years ago in San Francisco would be nearly as difficult as describing the exact shape of the fog, drifting into the city from the bay. ■

# POET IN THE MACHINE

## The inexhaustible Paul Valéry

### *By Arthur Krystal*

Discussed in this essay:

*Cahiers/Notebooks*, by Paul Valéry. Edited by Brian Stimpson, Paul Gifford, and Robert Pickering. Translated by Paul Gifford, et al. Peter Lang Publishing, 2000 (volumes 1 and 2). 1,248 pages. $161.90.

The liberal-arts campus of l'Université Montpellier in the south of France is named after the poet Paul Valéry (1871–1945), which may come as a surprise, even to much of the French populace. Valéry, after all, was not France's greatest poet or her most influential man of letters, yet the ministerial benediction seems apt. One cannot imagine, for instance, l'Université Victor Hugo, or l'Université Sainte-Beuve, or, saints preserve us, l'Université Charles Baudelaire. The French, who have been known to bestow honors on tummlers and tumblers, in this case got it right. Valéry was poet as pure thinker; a thinker who infused poetry with sophisticated synoptic and musical techniques; and a writer who brought an almost desperate analytical fervor to his own observations. He was also, famously, the poet who abandoned verse for nearly two decades in order to devote himself to more scientific, less sentimental pursuits.

Ambroise Paul Toussaint Jules Valéry was born in the coastal town of Sète to a Corsican father and an Italian mother, and spent his childhood in a house on a quay overlooking the Mediterranean. When he was thirteen the family moved inland to Montpellier, where Valéry attended the lycée and later studied law at the university. Never exactly a dedicated student, he was, however, a great reader, whose intellect

*Arthur Krystal's most recent book is* Agitations: Essays on Life and Literature *(Yale).*

[illegible] when a [illegible] ics and the music of Wagner. By [illegible] prodigious *Dictionna[illegible]* something of an obsession; and when a copy of Baudelaire's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's works fell into his hands in 1889, he seemed far more impressed by Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" than by the poems themselves.

Still in his teens, Valéry exultantly published his first poem and embarked on lifelong friendships with Pierre Louÿs and André Gide; it was Louÿs who introduced him to the person who would have the greatest influence on him, the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé. He also fell in love with a certain Mme. de Rovera and suffered in silence until a chance encounter with her sent him spinning—sent him, in fact, toward the "crisis" that would set the tone for the next twenty-odd years. We're not exactly sure what precipitated this crisis. Nor does Valéry ever enlighten us. In a letter to Louÿs, he writes only that while visiting Paris he fell "victim of a coincidence which was the strongest of all those that had reduced me to absurdity during the years 1891 and 1892, and finally drove me to flight."

On the night of October 4, 1892, with a storm raging outside his room, Valéry stayed awake till dawn undergoing his own dark night of the soul. At the advanced age of twenty, he was experiencing what in the Existential fifties was called an "identity crisis," and it led him to the realization that he was too vulnerable to his own sensibility and even to literature itself, which he already regarded as "the art of playing with the souls of others." Skeptical of writers' tricks and literature's easy effects, he wanted no part of them. Unwilling to write about his own feelings, he was at a loss to understand how other writers could shamelessly record theirs. As for verse, it, too, was literature; and literature, as he would one day note, "comprises a sort of politics and competitiveness, numerous idols, a devilish combination of priest and tradesman, of intimacy and publicity, indeed, of everything needed to frustrate its first-born aims."

Repudiating mental and emotional waffling, he elected to make himself over into someone immune to excessive feeling and anything that might obfuscate thought. He imposed [illegible] a sort of severely a rigorous discipline to save [himself] from the jaws of stupidity." How would he go about this? In a letter of 1898 he writes, entirely without irony:

> [illegible] you reduce everything to sensations and mental phenomena, you regroup these into two or three classes according to their properties & substitute in your book for a comprehensive relationship between all these factors of cognition, etc.; and [illegible] have in your hands a means of analysis entirely general and new. . . . According to the use you want to make of it you will put one of these ways, literature, philosophy, criticism or imagination etc. etc.

In short, he believed that verbal formulas based on a mathematical model were alone capable of expressing his thoughts with absolute clarity. It's not that he wanted to remove passion from the equation; it's just that he believed more passionately in the equation than in its parts. And this attempt to understand *how* he thought would, he surmised, affect *what* he thought. To this end he gave up literature and the writing of poetry and became his "own and only confidant."

Valéry was not the first writer to put literature behind him. Nearly three centuries earlier the author of the *Discours de la methode* announced that he had "entirely given up the study of letters, resolving to seek for no other science than that which [he] could find within himself, or at least in the great book of nature." Descartes made good on his promise, but it can't be said that he spent most of [illegible] investigating his own psyche. Valéry did, or, at any rate, did his best. So began what some have called Valéry's "long silence," which turns out to be something of an exaggeration. Unlike Alfred de Vigny and Rimbaud before him, or J. D. Salinger in our own time, the only thing Valéry stopped writing was poetry. He continued to write letters and a few reviews; he finished an intoxicating Socratic dialogue, "Introduction à la methode de Léonard de Vinci," as well as the wry and spooky "La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste." He also, in 1894, began keeping a daily journal of his thoughts, which over the next fifty years would expand into some 26,000 pages. Hardly what one would call a silence. Nor, for that matter, did he retreat into a monastery or even into himself.

A year or so after his "crisis," he moved to Paris, where he rented a small room in the rue Gay-Lussac. He put up a sign: MÉFIE-TOI SANS CESSE! (Be always on your guard!) and set up a blackboard on which he solved various mathematical problems. He put away Balzac and Hugo and picked up the works of Newton, Laplace, Kelvin, Faraday, Maxwell, Riemann, and Poincaré. Although he arose each morning at 5:00 A.M. and scribbled in his *Cahiers de Notes* until 8:00 A.M. (the hours "between the lamp and the sun"), he was by no means a recluse. He saw Gide and Louÿs, his friendship with Mallarmé deepened, and on Tuesday evenings he attended the literary gatherings at the poet's home. Tuesday nights with Mallarmé were by then a Parisian institution, and the list of those who dropped by included Verlaine, Manet, Degas, Huysmans, Heredia, Gauguin, Gide, Claudel, Wilde, Yeats, and Bernard Shaw. All made their way to Mallarmé's house to hear its owner quietly hold forth on the meliorative powers of verse.

To make ends meet, Valéry took a secretarial position at the Ministry of War and later became the private secretary to an official of the Agence Havas. In 1900 he married Jeannie Gobillard, a niece of the Impressionist painter Berthe Morisot, who had been a good friend of the Mallarmés. They moved to a house on the rue de Villejust (now rue Paul Valéry); eventually three children were born, and Valéry, to all appearances, was a middle-class fellow who went to work each day and returned home at night. Although he faithfully bent

ver his *Cahiers* each morning, by 898 he had entirely stopped writing or publication. And for the next fifeen years this man who had once ived for poetry did not attempt a ingle line of verse.

To stop writing poetry is not, in the great scheme of things, an earth-shattering event. Valéry's decision was certainly less ncandescent than Rimbaud's guilloining of his muse at nineteen and ubsequent departure for Africa. Rimbaud was a restless and imperius man-child whose abdication night be likened to kicking a habit or putting a tumultuous adolescence ehind him. The usual analgy is to a fiery comet that uickly burns itself out. Valéry, however, was more ike a slowly revolving plant, correcting his own trajectory by casting off poetry. Whereas one feels, perhaps nistakenly, that Rimbaud hrew away his life along vith his art, one thinks that Valéry might have actually nriched his life, at least for a ime, by subtracting poetry.

Still, one has to wonder vhy. The man was, after all, a oet, and you'd think that the arly literary success, to say othing of Mallarmé's enouragement, would have rged him on. But given his emperament, the same forces hat drew him to poetry also epelled him—that is, a sensiility that demanded absolute recision and perfection from the literary work. He could not abide vagueess, sentimentality, or technical shoddiness. And the French language is a ough *petit four*. Poetry in English is, of ourse, a matter of stresses between onsonants. "Take care of the consonants," Bishop Whately advised, "and he vowels will take care of themelves." With French, the situation is eversed. There are not six but nineeen vowels, and they are, as Valéry ointed out, "*très nuancées*." The oet therefore requires a precision intrument to construct the delicate verbal temples whose music is commenurate with their meaning. Like other poets who had become enamored of Wagner's operas, Valéry believed that all the arts should aspire to music. But an ideal is precisely that which cannot be made concrete: "What written page," Valéry asked, "can attain the heights of the few notes of the Grail motif?"

Valéry came of age when one could without self-consciousness speak of Beauty and the Absolute. It was the reason one made art and the reason one was doomed to fail: "Nothing so pure can coexist with the circumstances of life. We only traverse the idea of perfection as a hand passes with impunity through a flame; but the flame is uninhabitable." Those who ostentatiously staked a claim to Art only annoyed him. Valéry distrusted inspiration, disliked enthusiasm, loathed false profundity, and wasn't very fond of the real thing either. Although he was familiar with the Parnassian school as well as the more confessional poets who worked in *vers libéré* (soon to become *libre*), Valéry's appreciation was tempered by the rift between the sublime and the poor notations on the page that sought to attain it. Even the Symbolist poets, who had the right idea about revealing a hidden reality through indirection and imagery, could not often meet his exacting standards. Moreover, there already existed a poet who seemed to embody everything Valéry demanded of the art. Mallarmé's work was original, allusive, elliptical, and musically evocative. Mallarmé used language, Valéry noted, as if he had invented it. And if Mallarmé was perfection on the page, how could Valéry improve on it?



Anxiety of influence, however, does not altogether explain Valéry's self-imposed silence. His preoccupation with music, architecture, and mathematics persisted through the years, and he was drawn to them precisely because their "language" was unmediated: no words were required. In truth, he distrusted words and thought them incapable of lucidly expressing his ideas. "If I were to attempt to produce a philosophy for myself (may God forbid)," he observed, "I should begin by completely rewriting my dictionary." And though his affection and admiration for Mallarmé never waned, Valéry was after something else: "For him, the work; for me, the self." Just as some people go to the gym to work on their biceps and lats, Valéry spent three hours every morning mapping, shaping, and elaborating his thoughts. All writers are self-conscious, but Valéry was an interior cosmologist of the first order, honing self-awareness to a point where every thought was, additionally, a thought about itself. And this, of course, is just as infinitely regressive as it sounds.

But Valéry was not intimidated. Scientific thinking would organize cognizance into distinct components; and everything—from the act of seeing a stone to the construction of a church—would become a question of identification, separation, and elimination. Indefiniteness repelled him. Who else but Valéry could pray: "Deliver us from the immiscible"? And because the Multiplicity helps those who help themselves, Valéry followed developments in relativity, quantum theory, wave mechanics, group and set theory, topology, differential equations, and thermodynamics. This was no physics for poets curriculum; the man was in earnest. He applied what he

, Wittgenstein,
, Sartre,
of every poet who ever wrote in any
and this includes Goethe),
Valéry was probably the most scientifically and philosophically minded—
not of the poems so much as of the *Notebooks* that slowly and surely led him back to poetry.

The best way to characterize the *Notebooks* is to reproduce them—all 261,000 pages. Otherwise, they sound like something out of a story by Borges. Here is a mind determined to reject all idols, accept its own ignorance, cleanse language of unnecessary vocabulary, and enter into its own workings, becoming, as it were, part of the machinery. Thinking, for Valéry, was *active:* a vital force generated by certain principles, which ordered the flow of perceptions before thoughts could occur. In this, Valéry was strictly a Kantian, arguing intuitively that before we can have information things must be in formation. "Our philosophy is determined by its apparatus, and not by its object. It cannot be separated from its own difficulties, which constitute its *form*." And if he could—by watching himself think—discover the model that mental operations depended upon, he could then build his thoughts in much the same way that an architect—by mastering principles of physics and engineering—builds beautiful and monumental structures. One can't be permitted a doubtful sniff, but as Henri Bergson noted, "What Valéry has done, had to be attempted."

To get a sense of what
you might want to spend an evening
with "Monsieur Teste," written not long after Valéry began his daily abstractions. In "Teste" we first encounter the phrase that would, in one form or another, reappear in the *Notebooks* and the later poems: "I am being and seeing myself; seeing me see myself." Teste is Valéry distilled, the totally self-sufficient individual who claims: "I am at home in MYSELF, I speak my own language, I hate extraordinary things. Only weak minds need them. Believe me literally: genius is *easy*."

The usual charges leveled against Valéry include solipsism, narcissism, and an absence of feeling. None of
himself, and there is a world of difference
that he
neither supports nor refutes a passionate nature. The man had feelings; he just didn't want to have them, and he certainly wasn't going to go public with them. Nor, for that matter, does a mathematical mind or scientific temper preclude the poet's eye, or the painter's either. Valéry's sumptuous descriptions of Leonardo's work are astonishing in their tender regard. Indeed, it's Leonardo's notebooks, which Valéry consulted in the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1894, that inspired his own multitudinous journals, with their musings and meditations, fragments, neologisms, drawings, and watercolors. Valéry, in fact, considered the *Notebooks* his "real" work, and in number of words they dwarf the poems, essays, and Dialogues; they are, as the editors of the most recent edition aptly note, "the huge, submerged part of the iceberg of which the published work is only a fraction."

This is the fourth attempt to classify what is essentially unclassifiable, and the first to reproduce in English every line of the original 260 chapbooks in which Valéry wrote. Editing the *Cahiers* is a monumental undertaking, and Brian Stimpson, Paul Gifford, and Robert Pickering have acquitted themselves honorably. The first two volumes of the projected series give every indication of meticulous research and
The books are handsome; the typeface is delicate but readable; and the endnotes are what
notes are supposed to be: enlightening addenda served up in pithy,
nt prose. As for the variegated content, it will eventually be distributed throughout five volumes, each
organized around similar,
h not necessarily interrelated,
es. The first volume offers up:
Activity, Eros; the second: Art,
y, Literature; the third: Psy-
gy, Sensibility, Memory, and so on. As the editors make plain, th
are more than just anoth-
er of Valéry's works, something sup
plemental to the poems and criti
cism; they are in a sense responsibl
for everything he wrote after 1913.

Let other people make books, Pa
Valéry would make his mind—an an
bition so grand, so charged with psy
chological import, that literally hun
dreds, perhaps thousands of entrie
simply cannot measure up to his pla
for them. And this, unfortunately
makes Valéry sometimes more inte
esting to read about than to read in. Bu
for every intellectual wriggle that seem
commonplace or just plain wron
("Reading Flaubert is intolerable to
man who thinks") or that seems rigl
but really isn't ("A poem is to a nove
as a sound is to a noise"), there ar
scores of statements that tickle the fan
cy ("I would rather have composed
mediocre work in all lucidity than
brilliant masterpiece in a state
trance"). Furthermore, you never hav
to read far before he sets your mi
humming ("What is most beautiful is
necessity tyrannical"). Is he right? Pe
haps. But if he isn't, he forces you to fi
ure out why. As the fragments mou
up, one is reminded here and there
Voltaire, of Kant, of Nietzsche an
Wilde. The man was relentless. "You
duty is to exhaust," he told himself
And he did: he feasted on himself; h
binged on ideas; and the reader shoul
be prepared to do the same.

But let's be clear: Valéry never re
tired from the world. He read th
newspapers, kept up a lively corre
spondence, met with friends, swam i
the ocean, and told his children storie
And at age forty-eight this supposed
ly cold fish took a mistress, one wh
caused him much joy and, ve
heartache too. Naturally, he woul
parse the act of sexual intercours
into its excitable components, cha
acterizing it as a "machine emittin
sighs ... An oscillation around a poin
of equilibrium" (the man couldn't he
himself). Nevertheless, the love affa
shook him up, and the *Notebooks* r
verberate from its shocks and afte
shocks. If he lived only to analyze, h
still had to live; it was a dualism with
out irony: feeling isn't banished
make room for the intellect; it's sim
ply one more subject for the intelle

examine. Which is as good a way as ıy of describing Paul Valéry's return poetry.

In 1912 the publisher Gaston Gallimard sent Gide to obtain Valéry's permission to reprint his early erse. Valéry declined. Not to be put ff, Gallimard took already published oems, installed them in a new edi- ion, and mailed it to the reluctant au- ıor. Valéry looked, read, tampered, nd soon found himself drawn again to ıe act of composition. But being 'aléry, he couldn't just sit down and rite; he had to identify and delineate ıe elements that go into the poem's reation. Words alone were still not ufficient; the matter remained of small mportance; and content was for weak- ngs. What Monsieur Valéry intend- d by a poem was something else:

> The most powerful "creations," the most splendid monuments of thought, have been derived from the considered use of voluntary *resistance* to our immediate and continuous "creation" of observations, narratives, and impulses . . . Well-defined poetic rules . . . [are not] formulas of restricted creation . . . [they] may be entirely arbitrary: it is enough that they hamper the natural and inconsequent flow of digression or gradual creation.

Although this may be an elaborate vay of saying that tennis is played vith a net, that's still saying a lot; it's he net, after all, that defines the ame and is ultimately responsible or the skills necessary to avoid it. The creative act becomes, in effect, a ystem of transmutation through ap- lied laws, a sort of corollary to the aws that transform perception into nowledge. Where Kant had his cat- gories (quantity, quality, modality, elation), Valéry proposes resistance, eparation, elimination, proportion.

If you have ever wondered how a oet could write, "*Un poème est une orte de machine à produire l'état poé- ique au moyen des mots*"—now you now. Yes, the idea of the poem as a nachine for producing the poetic state hrough words sounds ridiculously aca- emic, but you have to understand ow much value Valéry placed on ma- hines. The human body is a machine, o is the brain, and no matter what ur instincts shout, it's the mind that creates poetry, not the soul, not the heart. "In poetry I see nothing but conscious investigations, acceptance of exquisite 'shackles,' inflection of thought, and the perpetual triumph of sacrifice." Most writers and readers, I suspect, are loath to acknowledge the difference between fiction or poetry and pure thinking, though the difference is both natural and beneficial. Whatever makes a poem or novel great, it has nothing to do with a conceptual scheme whose power is generated by the power of reason. Valéry knew this and resented it. When a symposium of French writers were asked why they wrote, Valéry's answer was: "out of weakness."

Naturally, music retained its preeminent position. Valéry wanted poetry to produce on the nervous system the same effects as music, and when he finally set to work on a new poem, one finger was plunking out a Gluck recitative on a piano. "La Jeune Parque" ("The Young Fate"), begun in 1913, was supposed to be his farewell to poetry, but he was still at it four years later, when it was taken from him and published in 1917—to great acclaim. And while this didn't exactly light a fire under him, he continued to compose. In a letter to Louÿs, he described the poet as a combination of refined dreamer, judicious architect, wise algebraist, and infallible calculator of "the effect to be produced." The effect is created by a classical scheme employing involuted syntax, emblematic words, shifting phrase lengths (with each of those nineteen vowels playing off one another), and symbolic images whose sequence of associations is developed through harmonic modalities. In short, think early Stravinsky rather than Mendelssohn. The irony, of course, is too barbed to ignore: for a man so enamored of clarity, Valéry wrote some of the most obscure poems in the French language.

Although not the first poet who believed that thought in poetry is inseparable from the cadences that deliver it, Valéry may have been the first to state unequivocally that to arrive at a perfect fusion of form and content, you cannot begin with content. Not surprisingly, T. S. Eliot was a big fan. Not only did Eliot admire the poems, he thought Valéry's true worth lay in the fact that


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poet, someone who, in Valéry's words, "is no longer the disheveled madman who writes verses in the course of one feverish night." But one must be permitted to dispute Valéry's own unpoetic self-portrait. Valéry may not have had the swagger of Byron or Baudelaire, but he felt the same desire to re-create himself through verse; this, too, is a form of passion. And for all the rigmarole about mathematical language, his own language could be both charming and tender (though this is lost in translation):

*Ta forme au ventre pur qu'un bras fluide drape,*
*Vous, gardes ta forme, vos yeux sont ouverts*

Your form with pure belly that a flowing arm
Guards, your form guards, and my eyes are open

In returning to poetry, Valéry did not detour around the *Notebooks*. He's still the archaeologist of the mind; he's still digging. The epigraph to his most famous poem, "La Cimetière marin" ("The Cemetery by the Sea") is from Pindar: "Do not, my soul, seek immortal life, but exhaust the field of the possible." The one thing poetry did alter in dramatic fashion was his social life. Slow to publish, Valéry was quick to garner fame. He became a public figure whose time was increasingly spent on essays, articles, lectures, and radio addresses. He traveled everywhere and met everyone: Conrad, Stravinsky, Rilke, Ortega y Gasset, and Einstein. Honors and prizes befell him. He joined the Committee for Arts and Letters of the League of Nations; he was elected to the Académie Française; awarded an honorary doctorate from Oxford; made director of the Centre Universitaire Méditerranéen de Nice, and president of the Société des Peintres Graveurs, and given the chair of poetics at the Collège de France.

But the world that this public Valéry returned to was not the world that the private Valéry had begun to record in 1894. The First World War had taken its toll. The appalling human losses and the gouged-out countryside brought him to the mournful conclusion that the mind itself had been cruelly injured. "Something deeper," he wrote, "has been worn away than the renewable parts of the machine . . . our fears are infinitely more precise than our hopes." Whereas once material progress had presumed mental progress, it now seemed that civilization, instead of saving us, was only finding more efficient means of destroying us. Suddenly, there appeared little reason to believe that man as a species would continue to grow wiser and more productive. "The future is not what it used to be," Valéry remarked. What seems now a cliché was at the time a profound reversal of thinking. "We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life," he wrote in 1919. "The circumstances that could send the works of Keats and Baudelaire to join the works of Menander are no longer inconceivable; they are in the newspapers."

In his general pessimistic outlook, Valéry is sometimes compared to that other conservative man of letters who lived across the channel. Both men had a background in philosophy, but one was a metaphysician, while the other disapproved of all metaphysics. Valéry was tethered to the earth in a way that Eliot resisted; and his assessment of the human condition, however melancholy, possesses a sympathy lacking in Eliot's canon. Sometimes Valéry is given to overstatement: "Convictions are simply and secretly murderous." But then any extreme political position was bound to meet with his displeasure, since it suggested a mind closed to its own potential. About the left, he had this to say: "The heart of the weak is hideous; anyone who suffers for a just cause or a creed has a poisonous serpent in his heart." About the right, he identified its fatal flaw and eerily predicted a change in strategy, at least where a certain kind of compassionate conservative is concerned: "The rightists have never had brains enough to pretend they have a heart." And his disgust with what European culture had brought down upon itself led to a terrible summation: "Simply remember that between men there are two relations only: logic or war."

If most politicians met with Valéry's disdain, intellectuals fared no better. He referred to them as a "tril e [illegible] *coniques*" (prefiguring Harold Ros[illegible] Lee's "herd of independent min[illegible] by half a century) and likened them [illegible] demons frequently looking into par[illegible] mirrors. (His own mirror reflect[illegible] everything.) Was he an elitist? [illegible] course. He recognized the differenc[illegible] between men and knew what m[illegible] were capable of. He understood th[illegible] the relationship between the indivi[illegible] ual and the state is a far more sub[illegible] matter than which one takes pre[illegible] dence. His own striking example [illegible] the intensely private individual fun[illegible] tioning in the public realm illustrat[illegible] a simple truth: The individual ca[illegible] not be more important than the sta[illegible] if the state is to survive, but if t[illegible] state is to survive honorably, then t[illegible] idea of the individual must be mo[illegible] important than the idea of the stat[illegible]

Read enough of Valéry and yo[illegible] will stumble across contradi[illegible] tions, paradoxes, and qualif[illegible] cations. But that is to be expecte[illegible] Sooner or later, a man like Valéry, [illegible] he lives long enough, is going to thin[illegible] of everything. He isn't so much i[illegible] constant as he is continuous, and i[illegible] deed the *Notebooks* are a lexicon[illegible] whirlwind: notions, ideas, impre[illegible] sions, and nascent treatises are a[illegible] swept along, pulled by the mind's rus[illegible] to examine and file. The fragmen[illegible] astonish, seduce, illuminate, repe[illegible] bore, and agitate. And yet, try as h[illegible] might, he never reached that inte[illegible] lectual Eden where knowing and trut[illegible] fold together. Valéry may have be[illegible] gun writing with the purpose of be[illegible] coming "an 'I' for whom the tor[illegible] mented 'I' would be an object," but i[illegible] the end the tormented "I" is stil[illegible] hanging around, still scowling int[illegible] the pure gaze of the other "I."

Years after jotting down that ther[illegible] is "Nothing more idiotic than th[illegible] heart—in which Pascal thinks w[illegible] should believe," Valéry surrenders: "M[illegible] heart. It triumphs. Stronger than ever[illegible] thing . . . this damn, sacred—H –. Has the old boy finally come round t[illegible] exclaiming along with his more emo[illegible] tional Irish contemporary: "O heart[illegible] O troubled heart"? Not quite, or at leas[illegible] not without getting in one parting

*Continued on page 8[illegible]*

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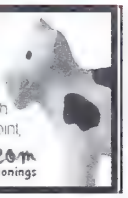
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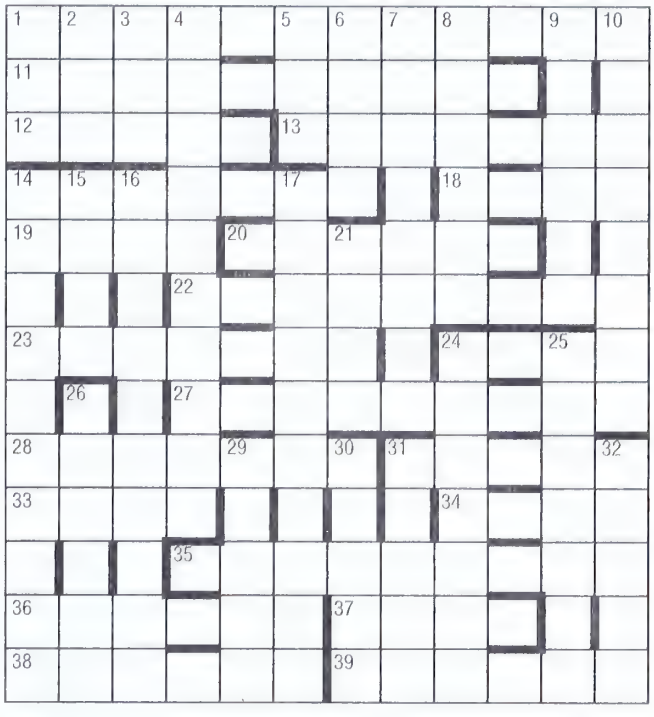
"Serbs, having thrown off their dictator, were waiting, in the dark, for internat[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

# Forced Entry

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

Nine answers must be decoded and appropriately altered before being entered in the diagram as new words. To conceal the location of these nine entries, word lengths are omitted.

Clue answers include eight capitalized words and one foreign word. 25D and 29D are uncommon words, common in crossword puzzles. The decoded entries include one variant spelling. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 57.



ACROSS

1. Opposed to one entering the Atlantic in the wrong manner
11. Turning around about cleaning up
12. Taking the Fifth—taking the Fifth, if not appearing at all
13. Name a sharp-looking cotton fabric
14. This could make sparest meals
18. Trampled with no sign of car, said "not guilty"
19. Planes returning articles from France (*two words*)
20. "Was certain," Marcus of the movies said, "it's worse than ever" (*two words*)
22. Happiness you get from broken toenail
23. New oilman, incorporated in name only
24. It can be hit up around middle of north!
27. Races to get to bed, rise refreshed
28. Sows to be legit after plowing within plantations' borders
31. Writes on the outside of little jars
33. One of five in Series
34. One loony outside in Paris's wee hours
35. Looking into dreamer I can analyze our culture
36. Acquires backing from George, Paul, or John, for example
37. Each loony is a pain
38. Lists for Savings and Loan workers
39. Not that many can't get a start—that's kind of a rock

DOWN

1. A state law?
2. The business there's no business like in Japan?
3. Even up above, that is celestially midway
4. Sure, without the Original Sin and Adam and Eve's expulsion, there is no opening for the Good Book
5. Invader sounds like a sweetie
6. Almost cancel the Times
7. Pint order at Starbucks depicts flower in the Midwest
8. Possessing kilo in marijuana? Well!
9. It's necessary to have enough skin care products
10. Secreting things initially, gigantic, large and small
14. Spirits of broadcasting, press, etc.
15. Tree ring identifies Muppet
16. Puzzle originator constructs anagram 11, but it's cheesy on the surface!
17. What five reindeer have right away get small and unoccupied
21. Lewd, uncontrolled get together
24. Hors- put on Aloha Airways
25. Crest— for the sloppy eater
26. Not quite undiscovered, Pound becomes a poet
29. Type encountered in a colony?
30. When imperfections are brought up, it sucks
31. Electricity pumps up in current extension leaders
32. Step up to bat—it's a run

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Forced Entry," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by February 17. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the April issue. Winners of the December 2003 puzzle, "Diamemicode," are Jean Cleary Cohen, Paul, Illinois; Brian Gunter Haines, Fall, New York; and Barbara Eubanks, Salt Lake City, Utah.



# FINDINGS

Buffalo International announced the discovery of a new species of boring beetle with blue spots that was discovered living in Londoño the bats on Carnival Island, Venezuela, unfortunately, the beetle and bats lived at a site designated in the construction of a new dam. Biologists in Hawaii were trying to capture the last three pelicans in existence and said they would try to breed them in captivity. A recent study found that large predators such as polar bears, recently declared endangered, were also the most prone to extinction. Researchers are trying to save much of Zimbabwe's wildlife, naturalists warned, and it was reported that large numbers of African fronts are dying of feline AIDS. Biologists were trying to exterminate nonnative frogs that have invaded the Galapagos Islands, and fecal tumors have been killing off Denmark's seals. The United Nations warned that the great apes are in danger of extinction, and there were continuing reports of cannibalism in Congo. Witchcraft killings and mutilations were on the increase in South Africa.

An American doctor revealed that some men that they had made an infertile woman pregnant using nuclear transfer, a technique similar to cloning that involves taking genetic material from the mother's fertilized yet defective egg and putting it into a healthy egg from another woman that lacks a nucleus. Working in China, one of the few countries where the procedure is legal, the doctor managed to begin the heartbeat of three embryos, though none ultimately survived. A California company called Genetic Savings and Clone, Inc., was planning to offer cloned cats for sale, the company also hoped to clone show comedy South Korean scientists created mad cow resistant cow clones. Scientists found that women prefer testosterone patches make friend women want to have sex, and the Food and Drug Administration approved a chewable female contraceptive. A British paleontologist reported the discovery of the oldest known fossil with a penis: the 425 million year old crustacean was christened *Colymbosathon ecplecticos*, which is Greek for "astounding swimmer with a large penis." Cancer researchers found that tumors obey a universal law of growth. Vaginal enhancement surgery was said to be all the rage in Britain, women in New York City, who are fond of narrow shoes, were having their toes shortened. Britain's Royal College of Surgeons said that face transplants, while technically possible, probably should not be performed. Clinical trials of an "organ matron" were under way in North Carolina, though researchers were having a hard time attracting volunteers. Canadian psychologists found that men are unable to think rationally when they see a beautiful woman.

The world's largest study of genetically modified crops concluded that GM sugar beets and oilseed rape are much worse for wildlife than the conventional varieties, primarily because of the heavy application of the poisons they were engineered to resist. Researchers in North Carolina found that a mother's diet can fundamentally change the genes of her offspring, at least among mice. Food researchers, hoping to prevent people from squeezing pears, have developed a label that will indicate when the fruit is ripe. Elephants in Thailand have been hijacking sugarcane shipments, one elephant typically blocks the road while others unload the sugarcane from the trucks. Villagers in Bangladesh found a missing woman halfway down a python's throat. It was reported that the human immune system produces ozone gas, and a large silo filled with biosolids, the popular fertilizer formerly known as sewage sludge, recently exploded in the Bronx. New Zealand abandoned its proposal to tax flatulent livestock. Australian physicists reported that giant methane bubbles, which sometimes emerge from solid methane deposits under the ocean, can sink ships. Atmospheric researchers discovered that the sky is rising. ■

*Findings is drawn from recent news reports and scientific journals.*
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*Cover by Ray Bartkus*


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Printed in the U.S. Periodicals postage paid at New York, New York, and additional mailing offices. In Canada, second-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. In Canada, International Publications Mail Agreement #40013802. Canadian GST 12477 4167 RT. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Harper's Magazine, P.O. Box 885, Markham Station Main, Markham Ontario L3P8M9. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to *Harper's*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. ISSN0017-789X. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please provide both address from last issue and new address. Allow six weeks advance notice. SUBSCRIPTIONS: $21 one year. Canada and United States possessions, add $2; other foreign, add $20 per year. Send orders to *Harper's Magazine*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. SUBSCRIPTION PROBLEMS: Write *Harper's Magazine*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511, or call (800) 444-4653, M–F, 8 A.M.–midnight, S–S, 9 A.M.–7 P.M., EST. All requests for PERMISSIONS and REPRINTS must be made in writing to *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, New York 10012. The Readings in *Harper's Magazine* every month consist of texts and documents found in the public domain, most of them abridged for reasons of space and not all of them reprinted with permission. *Harper's Magazine* will not consider or return unsolicited nonfiction manuscripts that have not been preceded by a written query, but will consider unsolicited fiction. Unsolicited poetry will not be considered or returned. No queries or manuscripts will be considered unless they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Visit our website at http://www.harpers.org.

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# LETTERS

## Radio Daze

Although I share Jeff Sharlet's concern about the size and power yielded by Clear Channel ["Big World: How Clear Channel Programs America," Essay, December 2003], his quest for abuse of power results in the unfortunate casting of Philadelphia promoter Sean Agnew as a saint and promoter Bryan Dilworth as "Clear Channel's man." Focusing on consolidated radio ownership is a much more valid enterprise than lending credence to conspiracy theories encouraged by a young entrepreneur all too eager to blame problems on his competition.

For Agnew to maintain his desired image as a righteous punk fighting authority mandates an enemy to struggle against, and if Clear Channel did not exist it would certainly be Electric Factory or whoever else was competing to book the same acts. The only difference is that there would be no media outlets hungry to transform his hostile attacks into politically relevant cover stories.

Most perplexing was the startling omission of the fact that the Khyber, the club booked by Dilworth, was also shut down by Philadelphia's Department of Licensing and Inspections last March, just as Agnew's had been months before.

Rather than fostering legitimate criticism of Clear Channel, Sharlet promotes needless antagonism in the Philadelphia music community while wasting the reader's time chasing conspiracies that simply do not exist.

*Ben Morgan*
Former employee
Curt Flood Booking
Philadelphia

Jeff Sharlet neglects to mention an increasingly influential aspect of the Clear Channel business: satellite radio.

XM Satellite Radio, with which Clear Channel holds various financial partnerships, recently surpassed the 1.3 million-subscriber mark, making it one of the fastest-growing entertainment technologies ever.

XM and its competitor, Sirius, provide their listeners with hundreds of genre-specific channels—including pop, jazz, bluegrass, con-

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. [illegible] email us at letters@harpers.org. [illegible] are more likely to be published, and [illegible] subject to editing. Volume prevents individual acknowledgment.*

ervative talk, liberal talk—and hese channels are, for the most part, bsent of advertising.

This creates a new dynamic in the lebate between the business-minded nd the public-interest considera- ions in radio, since satellite radio is roving to be successful for its con- glomerate investors even while it rovides the marginalized music and pinion so desired and defended by lear Channel's detractors.

*Andrew Whitacre*
Cambridge, Mass.

Clear Channel does not offer what people want, it makes them want what it has to sell, which is distraction. It broadcasts, not to arouse the public, but to keep them preoccupied.

*Helen Kaszeta*
North Haven, Conn.

I am not worried about Clear Channel taking over the world, because in my world it already has. I now aspire to find the DJR500's of my community and support them with my hard-earned money while continuing to boycott all the venues controlled or rented out by Clear Channel. For music, I have other options, like Internet radio or my iPod, which allow me to listen to rock from Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela without commercial interruptions.

In the end, Clear Channel will fail, just like every other monopoly has failed in the history of the world, and I will celebrate when it finally comes crashing down.

*Ramon A. Martinez*
Philadelphia

Reading Jeff Sharlet's Clear Channel essay, a haunting line by Raymond Chandler came to mind: "The growth of populations has in no way increased the amount [of art]; it has merely increased the adeptness with which substitutes can be produced and packaged."

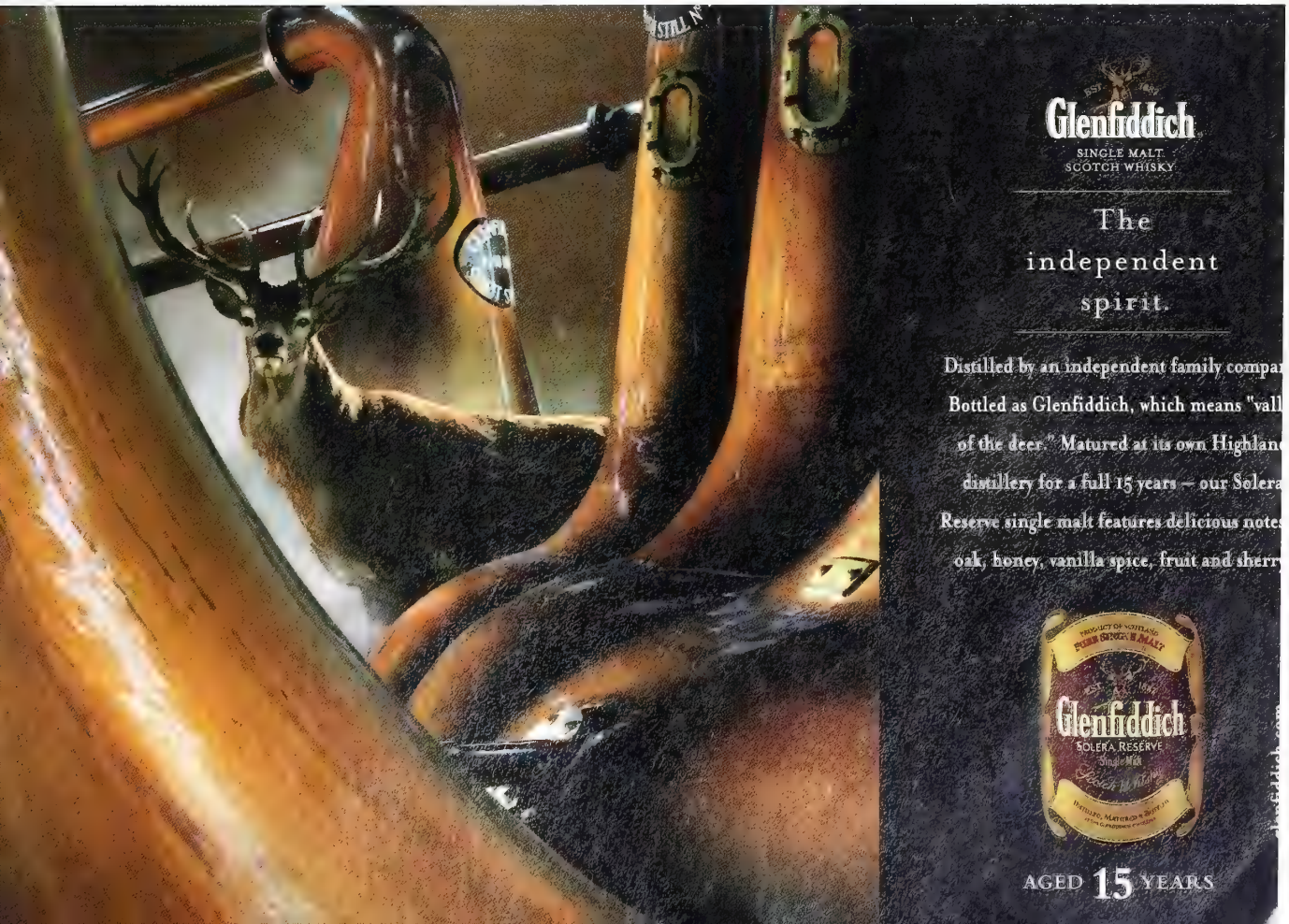
*Peter Stekel*
Seattle

## Not Our Man in Haiti

Madison Smartt Bell ["Mine of Stones," Letter from Haiti, January] writes that Tim Pershing was "teaching a version of high-school civics to grass-roots organizations on the Lavalas end of the spectrum, on behalf of... the National Democratic Institute" when Pershing has never been employed by NDI in Haiti, nor has he ever been involved in our programs.

NDI has worked in Haiti since 1986 and observes strict political neutrality in all its activities. The majority of organizations in Haiti receiving NDI's assistance are rural civil-society organizations that work for collective progress in their communities. In addition to our civic-education and advocacy-training initiatives, NDI has worked with the governing Lavalas Family party, the opposition Convergence Democratique coalition, and several other non-aligned opposition parties to help them strengthen their internal structures and outreach to members.

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[illegible] to complete [illegible] path that set for [illegible] 200 seats [illegible] Haiti [illegible] liberal [illegible], and [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]
National Democratic Institute
Port-au-Prince

*The editors respond:*

Tim Pershing was indeed unaffiliated with NDI. We regret the error.

## Stealth of Nations

If he were alive to read it, the great British political economist Adam Smith would instantly send his compliments to Chalmers Johnson for his detailed indictment of how U.S. businesses are profiting from Bush's war in Iraq ["The War Business," Report, November 2003]. Here is what Smith had to say about such shenanigans:

> No nation ever voluntarily gave up the dominion of any province, how troublesome soever it might be to govern it, and how small soever the revenue which it afforded might be in proportion to the expense which it occasioned. Such sacrifices, although they might frequently be agreeable to the interest, are always mortifying to the pride of every nation: and, what is perhaps of still greater consequence, they are always contrary to the private interest of the governing part of it.

*Herman M. Hevn*
Baltimore

Although I do not doubt Chalmers Johnson's assertion that opium production increased eighteenfold, from 185 to 3,400 tons, in the first year of Afghanistan's liberation from the Taliban, it should be noted that the reason for this increase was the Taliban's effective work in nearly eradicating the opium crop the previous year. Of course, this deed was not accomplished without incentive: The U.S. government awarded the Taliban some $40 million for their anti-[illegible] efforts in the year of 9/11.

*M[illegible]turo*
Leysin, Switzerland

## The People's Choice?

With due respect to the estimable Amos Oz and David Grossman ["Conditional State," Readings, November 2003], angst will no longer suffice.

Anxious secular Jews ask the world how the Arabs can begrudge them their sliver of a state while adamant religious Jews go about the sacred national task of filling out Israel's "God-given" borders from the Nile to the Euphrates. The quest of the latter answers the question of the former. The Israel that is has fallen victim to the "Eretz Israel" that never will be.

*Pete Karman*
Rocktail, Conn.

David Grossman describes how "a reality in which you see people torn apart" undermines the belief in culture and democracy in Israel. If Israelis begin to gauge the impact of these violent events on their lives, they will be well on their way to understanding the even deeper shock that is measured out to Palestinian society.

*Bernhard Geyer*
Madison, Wis.

## Juris(im)prudence

In Michael Isikoff's exchange with Gene Lyons ["Jones and the Giant Impeachment," Letters, December 2003], his argument appears much weaker.

Throughout Clinton's presidency, too many journalists, editors, and Republicans embraced the reconfigured (and distorted) legal "concept" of "guilty until proven innocent" with regard to any Clinton legal matter, an attitude that sold many books and won some Republican elections. When Isikoff opines that in the Jones lawsuit, "the central thrust was that Clinton's conduct, in and of itself, constituted on-the-job harassment," he, too, assumes guilt, which, of course, was never proven.

As a practical matter, Clinton's attorneys simply wanted to get rid of the Jones case, which is precisely what happens in many non-meritorious

*Continued on page 98*

# NOTEBOOK

## Dar al-Harb

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*Men never do evil so fully and so happily as when they do it for conscience's sake.*
—Pascal

During the two and a half years since the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the country's book publishers have poured forth a steady flow of propaganda recruiting the American citizenry to never-ending war against all the world's evildoers. The edifying tracts come in two coinages—those that praise America the Beautiful (virtuous and just, forever innocent and pure in heart) and those that magnify the threat posed by sinister enemies as numberless as the names for grief—nuclear weapons in the hands of North Korean generals and Pakistani bicyclists, smallpox virus hidden in the luggage or on the person of a gentleman from Bolivia, Arab fanatics spawning in the sewers of the once romantic Middle East. The sales pitch can be inferred from a short but representative list of titles—*Taking America Back; Why We Fight; Ripples of Battle; An Autumn of War; A Heart, a Cross, and a Flag.* I can't pretend to having read more than a few of the hundred-odd books made to the design specifications of a Pentagon press release, but judging by those of which I've read at least enough to appreciate the author's command of the false but stouthearted syllogism, the attempt at persuasion appears to have shifted from the secular to the religious lines of argument.

The books published during the first twelve months of the country's introduction to the concept of its own mortality stated the problem as one open to solution with the instrument of reason, possibly also with some knowledge of history and a passing acquaintance with the socio-economic circumstances confronted by a majority of most of the world's peoples, Asian, African, and Latin American as well as Muslim. The writing wasn't distinguished, but at least it could be said that the discussion was taking place in the vernacular languages of the world in time. The more recent books borrow their inspiration from the verses of the Bible and the suras of the Koran. The authors who decry the sins committed by Americans in America (cynicism, homosexuality, believing what they read in the *New York Times*) adopt the rhetoric of Jonathan Edwards cleansing the souls of the unfaithful in the seventeenth-century wilderness of Puritan New England; the authors who preach holy crusade against the foreign infidel in modern-day Jerusalem and Damascus issue fatwas in the manner of Osama bin Laden.

To the latter company of vengeful imams we now can add the names of David Frum, a former speechwriter for President George W. Bush, and Richard Perle, member and former chairman of the Defense Policy Board within the U.S. Department of Defense. Their jointly assembled "manual for victory" (*An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror*) reached the bookstores in early January and was promptly boosted onto the bestseller list because of the authors' elevated rank within the intellectual apparat that supplies the Bush Administration with its delusions of moral grandeur. Attached to the White House staff in 2002, Frum brightened that year's State of the Union Address with the phrase "axis of evil"; in 2003 he published *The Right Man,* a hagiography portraying President Bush as a man impervious to doubt, casting his mission and that of his country in the grand vision of God's master plan. Perle has served as an apostle of hard-line power politics since the early 1980s: an assistant secretary of defense in the Reagan Administration, closely associated with the troop of visionary ideologues currently directing the course of our militant foreign policy, a resident fellow, together with Frum, of the American Enterprise Institute.

The result of their collaboration is an ugly harangue that if translated into Arabic and reconfigured with a few changes of word and emphasis (the objects of fear and loathing identified as America and Israel in place of Saudi Arabia and the United Nations) might serve as a lesson taught to a class of eager jihadists at a madrasa in Kandahar. The book's title testifies both to the absurdity of its premise and the ignorance of its authors. Evil is a story to which not even Billy Graham can write an end; nor can the 101st Airborne Division set up a secure perimeter around the sin of pride. The War on Terror is a war against an abstract noun, as unwinnable as the wars on

jacked airliners and precision-guided cruise missiles follow flight paths [illegible] mullahs Omar, Frum, and Perle, and some of the prospective casualties (most of them civilian) might care [illegible] the [illegible] hand. As with all forms of propaganda, the prose style doesn't warrant extensive quotation, but I don't do the authors a disservice by reducing their message to a series of divine commandments. Like Muhammad bringing the word of Allah to the widow Khadija and the well Zem-Zem, they aspire to a tone of voice appropriate to a book of Revelation.

THE WAR ON TERROR—"Has only just begun." "There is no middle way for Americans: It is victory or holocaust."

THE UNITED STATES—"The greatest of all great powers in world history."

MILITANT ISLAM—Vast horde of Arabs, possibly numbering in the millions, bent on world domination. They intend to "fasten unthinking, unquestioning slavery" on the mind of Western civilization. As insatiable in their thirst for blood as Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin.

[illegible] "faint-hearts" who lack "the nerve for the fight."

[illegible] obstacle to victory." Controlled by "complacent" functionaries who seek "to reconcile the irreconcilable, to negotiate the unnegotiable, and to appease the unappeasable."

THE UNITED NATIONS—"Not an entirely useless organization," but one that does more harm than good. It "regularly broadcasts a spectacle as dishonest and morally deadening as a Stalinist show trial, a televised ritual of condemnation that enflames hatreds and sustains quarrels that might otherwise fade away." The [illegible] permission to attack any [illegible] which George Bush, like [illegible] before him, notices [illegible] general loosening of the ties of [illegible] society."

[illegible] "Fetid swamp" [illegible] the "enormous cesspit" [illegible] that they "should set it into a purifying fire. "The toughest [illegible] triumph. Another six months, and nobody will be able to tell the difference between Baghdad and Orlando.

[illegible] Headquarters tent of militant Islam. "The Saudis qualify for their own membership in the Axis of Evil." Must be purged of ideological infection.

ARABS RESIDENT IN PALESTINE—Must learn "to swallow their defeat." They have as little chance of territorial restoration as the Oglala Sioux who once drifted through the valley of the Little Big Horn.

ISRAEL—Land of heroes, light unto the gentiles. "Everything that liberal Europeans think a state should not be: proudly nationalist, supremely confident, willing and able to use force to defend itself—alone if need be."

IRAN—"The regime must go."

CRITICS OF AMERICA'S WAR ON TERROR—Cowards, "softliners," "Clintonites," "defeatists," pillars of salt.

GERMANY—"Fair-weather friend." An ally no longer to be trusted.

FRANCE—An unfriendly power that "gleefully smashed up an alliance [NATO] that had kept the peace of the world for half a century." Jealous and resentful of America's greatness and goodness of heart. Europe must be forced "to choose between Paris and Washington."

NON-DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS—America not obliged to honor their pretensions. "It's not always in our power to do anything about such criminals, nor is it always in our interests, but when it is in our power and our interests we should toss dictators aside with no more compunction than a police sharpshooter feels when he downs a hostage-taker."

[illegible] OF THE EARTH—Any [illegible], town, desert, parliament, or shopping mall where "terrorists skulk and hide." Among the countries eligible for some form of instructive intervention, the authors list Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Colombia, Venezuela, Paraguay, Brazil, Zimbabwe, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, northern Nigeria.

NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION CARD—Necessary precaution. All Americans must learn to inform on one another, to admire the vigilant citizen "who *does his or her part*." "A free society is not an un-policed society. A free society is a self-policed society."

AMERICAN CIVILIAN POPULATION—Must be prepared to accept losses. The protection of American citizens not as important as the killing of Satanic Muslims. The authors cite General George Patton: "Nobody ever won a war by caring for his wounded. He won by making the other poor SOB care for *his* wounded."

In their setting forth of the reforms that must soon descend on Saudi Arabia (on pain of swift punishment if the reforms don't come soon enough), Mullah Frum and Mufti Perle complain of the puritanical clerics in that country who "preach hate-filled sermons, teach the most frightful lies, and disseminate the deadliest conspiracy theories," who claim the authority of God for exhorting the faithful to acts of "cruelty and evil." They describe themselves. Their book summons all loyal and true Americans to the glory of jihad, and as an indication of the sort of thing they have in mind they rely on the wisdom of Sheikh Yousuf al-Qaradawi, dean of Islamic studies at the University of Qatar and a fond admirer of the terrorist bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The two Washington ayatollahs mean to damn the sheikh, not to praise him, but when they quote his interpretation of Dar al-Harb (the Domain of Disbelief) they define the concept that they have made their own. The sheikh put it as plainly as possible to a crowd of Western journalists in Stockholm in the summer of 2003: "It has been determined by Islamic law that the blood and property of people of Dar al-Harb (i.e., non-Muslims) is not

otected. Because they fight against id are hostile toward the Muslims, iey annulled the protection of his ood and his property."

Nor did the sheikh draw an unecessarily fine distinction (defeatist, ppeasing, faint-hearted) between ie military and civilian targets of jiad. A good Christian is a dead Christian. "In modern war," so said ie sheikh, "all of society, with all its lasses and ethnic groups, is mobized to participate in the war, to aid ts continuation, and to provide it vith the material and human fuel reuired for it to assure the victory of ie state fighting its enemies. Every itizen in society must take upon imself a role in the effort to provide or the battle. The entire domestic ront, including professionals, laborrs, and industrialists, stands behind ie fighting army, even if it does not ear arms."

The Bush Administration's senior eopoliticians, among them Tom Aidge at the Department of Homeand Security and Donald Rumsfeld t the Pentagon, give weekly press onferences at which they make iore or less the same speech—our rmy in Iraq bringing the great ruths of democracy and global capalism to the Domain of Disbelief, ur civilian population girded for attle at security checkpoints on very major highway, at every airort, river crossing, bus and subway top. Last year on Christmas Eve he FBI issued a bulletin advising 8,000 of the country's law-enforcenent agencies to watch out for eople carrying almanacs—i.e., vorks that answer to the uses of the ntellect rather than to the joys of uperstition. Almanacs, said the BI, can be used by terrorists "to asist with target selection and preperational planning." Because almanacs contain information, often ccompanied by photographs and naps, about waterways, bridges, lams, reservoirs, tunnels, buildings, nd roads, anyone carrying such a hing might be a terrorist or a friend f a terrorist. It was suggested that olice officers approach with caution all almanacs "annotated in susicious ways."

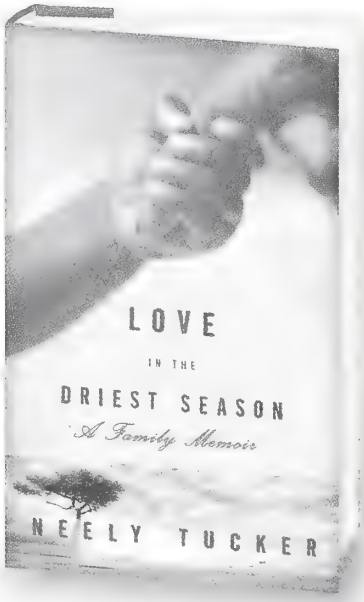
Never having heard the angry teaching in a madrasa or a mosque, I can't make a close or fair comparison to the briefing papers passed around the conference tables at the American Enterprise Institute, but if what I've been told is true (that the sermons depend for their effect on the expression of high-pitched rage) then I don't know how the language differs from that of Mufti Frum and Mullah Perle. Their truths are absolute, their verbs invariably violent—"destroy," "smash," "purge," "deny," "punish," "cut off," "stomp." Provide them with a beard, a turban, and a copy of the Koran, and I expect that they wouldn't have much trouble stoning to death a woman discovered in adultery with a cameraman from CBS News.

Set aside the question as to whether *An End to Evil* proceeds from a cynical motive (the authors fully aware of the lies told to promote a fanciful dream of paradise), and we're still left with a frightening display of ignorance that doesn't augur well for the future of the American Republic. In place of reasoned argument, we have Stone Age incantation, the sense or knowledge of history grotesquely distorted in the fun-house mirrors of ideological certainty, the observations of two respected and supposedly well-informed civil servants framed in a vocabulary as primitive as the one that informs the radio broadcasts of Rush Limbaugh, the television commentary of Sean Hannity and Bill O'Reilly, and the novels of Tim LaHaye and Saddam Hussein.

Historians who study the rise and fall of nations mark the downward turn at the point when the rulers of the state begin to lose faith in the merely human institutions that embody a society's courage of mind and rule of law. They place their trust in miracles and look for their salvation to charlatans who come to comfort them with stories about the end of evil. When the Turks sacked Constantinople in 1453, they found 10,000 people in the church of Santa Sophia, earnestly praying for deliverance in a sanctuary made sweet with the smell of incense and stale with the scent of fear. Authors Frum and Perle trade in the same commodities. ■


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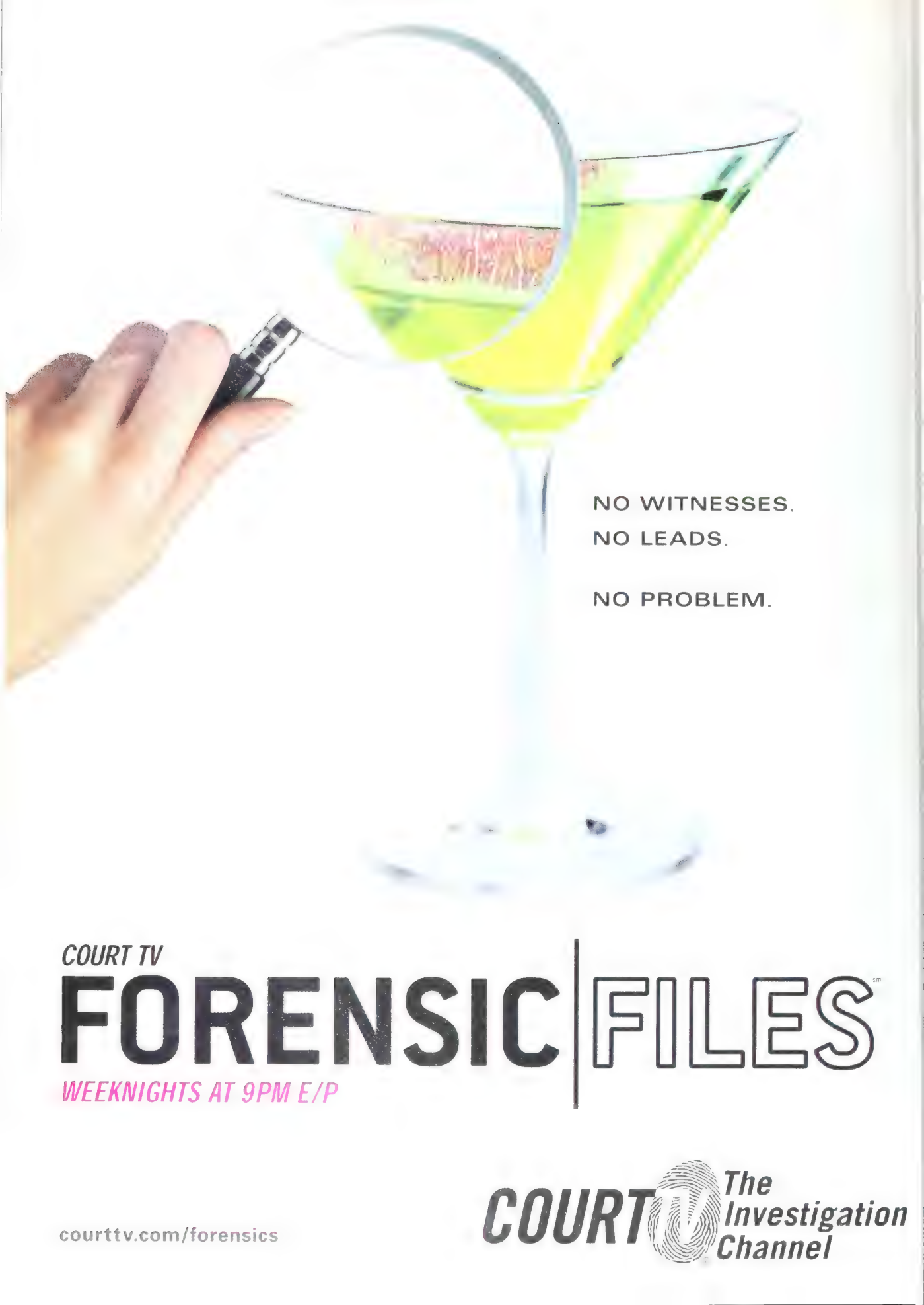

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Rank of Texas among states in which the largest percentage of citizens lack health insurance : 1
Rank of Vermont : 42
Years of insurance that the money lost annually to health-care fraud and overbilling could buy every uninsured U.S. child : 3
Percentage of Americans living below the poverty level who voted in the 2000 presidential election : 38
Percentage of Americans living at twice the poverty level who voted : 68
Amount the new Democratic mayor of San Francisco contributed to the 2000 Bush campaign : $500
Fine paid by two of John Ashcroft's PACs for breaking campaign-finance laws during the 2000 election cycle : $37,000
Year in which then-congressman Donald Rumsfeld gave a speech criticizing war profiteering by Brown & Root : 1966
Ratio of the number of privately contracted military workers in Iraq to the number of British troops there : 5:4
Chances that an American said three weeks after the Iraq invasion began that the U.S. casualty count was acceptable : 2 in 3
Chance that an American felt that way by November : 1 in 3
Number of U.S. soldiers whose retirement or leave has been postponed by the Army to maintain troop strength : 3,500
Number of the 4 million Bosnians made refugees since 1991 who are still waiting to go home : 400,000
Percentage change since 2000 in immigration to Israel : –65
Percentage change since then in the number of Israelis living abroad : +9
Number of times Osama bin Laden used the term "Al Qaeda" publicly before September 11, 2001 : 0
Minimum number of nuclear weapons in the oceans as a result of U.S. and Soviet accidents : 50
Estimated cost to replace Lawrence Livermore weapons laboratory's locks after master keys were lost last year : $1,700,000
Days after George W. Bush announced plans for a Moon base that the Hubble telescope's maintenance was discontinued : 2
Estimated percentage of television static that derives from the Big Bang : 1
Average percentage change in the amount of sunlight reaching the Earth per decade between 1960 and 1990 : –3
Years required for the creation in 2002 of the first virus made from scratch with commercially available ingredients : 3
Weeks required to create the second such virus last fall : 2
Chance that a resident of China has never heard of AIDS : 1 in 5
Estimated number of doctors in China with experience in treating HIV/AIDS : 100
Cost of testing each slaughtered U.S. cow for mad cow disease per pound of beef produced : 5¢
Ratio of the number of cows France tests each week to the number the United States has tested in the last decade : 7:6
Estimated percentage of British food-poisoning infections caused by bottled water : 12
Days after Italian magistrates began investigating food conglomerate Parmalat last December that its former CEO was jailed : 8
Months after the Justice Department began investigating Enron in 2001 that an Enron executive was jailed : 21
Days after a columnist outed an undercover CIA officer last year that the Justice Department began investigating it : 74
Days after Paul O'Neill criticized the President on TV in January that the former treasury secretary came under investigation : 1
Number of the 420 demonstrators arrested at Philadelphia's 2000 Republican National Convention who were convicted : 23
Number whose cases are still pending : 9
Percentage of U.S. defendants who require a public defender : 80
Maximum prison sentence in months for causing the death of a U.S. worker by willfully violating federal safety regulations : 6
Maximum prison sentence in months for harassing a wild burro on federal lands : 12
Number of monkeys fed a nine-course meal at last year's Chinese Banquet for Monkeys in Lopburi, Thailand : 3,000
Average number of handstands an adult male panda does daily : 8

*Figures are the latest available as of January 2004. Sources are listed on page 96.*
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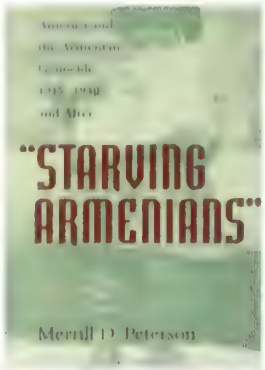

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# READINGS

[Essay]

## HUNGER

*By Jane Stevenson, from the 2003 issue of* New Writing, *an annual collection of poetry and prose published by Picador in Great Britain.*

In 1952, Edouard Wyss-Dunant, a doctor interested in climbing, coined a descriptive term, the "Death Zone," for the region above 7,500 metres. At this height the effects of altitude on the human body are such that human life cannot be sustained. The body begins to die. Food is not digested, and the body eats into its own muscle and bone to survive. Climbers in the Death Zone are dead men walking. The fact that they continue to put one foot in front of the other is due solely to their will to continue, while every nerve, instinct, and bodily process screams its protest at this insanity. This we understand as heroism; a gauging of the individual against the outer limits of the possible, which has its own compelling internal logic, although, or because, the great mountaineers characteristically go on and on until some mountain kills them. We are complicit with the fact that extreme mountaineering, unlike any other sport, ultimately demands that its players should die, because some hill, somewhere, will always offer an unpredictable and disastrous combination of risks. While postmodernist high culture is explicitly anti-heroic, much value is still placed on heroism, indicated by the basic yardstick of a capitalist society: it is, in one way or another, worth a lot of money.

There is also a Death Zone in starvation. In 2001 in Leixlip, the little place which the Vikings called "the salmon-leap" because of its waterfall and which is now a suburb of Dublin, four athletes of God walked into it step by step, without budging an inch from their chosen path. Josephine, Frances, Catherine, and Ruth-Bridget (called Breege-Ruth) Mulrooney locked themselves into a new house in a featureless executive village and starved themselves to death. Is this, or is it not, heroism? If not, what is it?

If one fasts for even a day, there is a rapid progression from sharp hunger through euphoria to a sort of numb absence. After four or five days this absence becomes, somehow, congested, as if the body has become a closed system. I don't know what starvation feels like beyond that, since around day five I went to answer the door, fell down the stairs because my knees had given way, and realized I was being an idiot. I was twenty-two years old, living alone for the first time and playing games with myself, the games of courage and self-limitation that are natural to the young. Perhaps because I was a girl I was testing my limits with respect to my own body rather than by doing something athletic and risky. Also, of course, I wanted to lose weight because everyone, including me, was agreed that being thin was beautiful, admirable, a symptom of moral worth, and would make people love me.

In fact, when I did some research, I found that my experience had taught me almost nothing about what the Mulrooneys went through. It is easy to imagine that the blockage of feeling continues, that perhaps the blurring of perception even increases during a slow, gentle slide

of people who, as you read this, are
ed, apathetic resignation. They
agony, because beyond a certain point the
ous stomach, like a
with helpless owners, will turn and
commensals. The body

[Idioms]

## POOR KIM'S ALMANAC

*From* How Koreans Talk: [illegible] Collection of Expressions, *by Sang-Hun Cha and* [illegible], *Torchia publishers*

*Just because you fear maggots doesn't mean you should go* [illegible]
Don't let obstacles deter you.

*Rice cake in the picture*
Pie in the sky

*You've got a big, swollen liver.*
You've got a lot of nerve.

*The other man's rice cake always looks bigger.*
The grass is always greener on the other side.

*When the rabbit is caught, the hunter kills, boils, and eats his hunting dog.*
Subordinates are expendable.

*He darts between the liver and the gallbladder.*
He'll switch sides if it suits him.

*The person you are when you go to the toilet is completely different from the person you are when you walk out of the toilet.*
Once on shore, we pray no more.

*She's saying where to put persimmons and pears at other people's ancestral rites.*
She's meddling.

*He can't distinguish between excrement and bean paste.*
He can't tell good from bad.

*He belched like a dragon after eating a loach.*
It was all for show.

*Pummeling a dead monk*
[illegible] defeated enemy

*Covering the body of a dead boy*
A useless gesture

within, eating into its own muscle and bone, a process which is slow but not at all gentle. As [illegible]'s Death Zone, the anorexic's [illegible], once entered, is not easily left. Beyond a certain point, the individual will have [illegible] of his or her sojourn in the [illegible] the dead. The angel of death maintains [illegible] at the exit of the Death Zone, and the price which returnees must pay is months or [illegible] their natural life. And, of course, those who go so far will find that it is no longer possible to come back at all.

Many people have starved in this world of unquantifiable suffering, and for many hunger is still what it has always been, a fact of life, but that is not why mountaineers and the Mulrooneys are interesting. What distinguishes the paladins who enter one or another Death Zone is not their suffering but their perception that to do so *voluntarily* is a triumph of the human will.

The archetypal vision of the adventure is of the quest, the intellectual and spiritual beauty of the triumph of the will. *Excelsior*, "ever higher." But, quiet, strange, and tenacious, there is an archetypal vision of the heroic fast, which is just as old if not older. In Sanskrit law, codified three thousand years ago, long before Jason and his Argonauts set sail on the first epic journey of the Western tradition, there was a legal sanction available to the aggrieved called "sitting *dharna*." The injured person sat at the gate of his tormentor and fasted, and this ordeal by embarrassment continued until arbitrators were called and the problem settled. The whole point about *dharna* is that it depends on a shared knowledge of starvation to make the sight unbearable. If you do not know what it means to starve, then you do not, in the most literal sense, comprehend what the litigant is up to, and it is morally and socially possible to watch in incomprehension as the body withers, consumed ultimately by the fire of its own internal combustion.

The coercive fast was also a feature of Irish law before the English conquest, and this archaic sense of starvation as a legal sanction underlies the very Irish weapon of the hunger strike, exemplified in the long agony of Bobby Sands and the other men who died for the right to be considered political prisoners. But hunger strikes have failed as a political weapon in the twentieth century, because we have completely ceased to understand the ancient, intimate brutality of starvation. Only an absolute disjunction between our ideas of ourselves, our bodily integrity, and the threat of starvation would allow us to find beauty in the bodies of women too thin to bear children. You have forgotten the true nature of hunger if you believe that it is impossible to be too rich or too thin.



COURTESY THOMAS WERNER GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

*"Field Goal," a photograph by Mae Fatto, whose work was on exhibit last month at Thomas Werner Gallery, in New York City.*

Thinness is a double-edged phenomenon in the West. On the one hand, the beautiful and glamorous are as slender as gazelles, which we see as right and good; on the other, there is an epidemic of eating disorders: young girls (mostly) get thinner and thinner until, in some cases, they enter the Death Zone, which we perceive as tragic. With respect to extreme adventure, book after book of tight-lipped prose sets forth the basic tenets of the ultimate test of man against the elements and represents this as a wholly sane extension of normal behaviour, though Himalayan mountaineering bears the same relationship to healthy exercise that anorexia does to healthy weight-watching. By contrast, the literature of self-starvation is cast in negative terms: recovery stories are popular, but the positive view is unpublishable. No one would risk putting out teen-interest books on heroic fasting, but since the Internet circumvents publishing as such, there is now a secret electronic literature of anorexia in which girls meet in chatrooms to recognize, celebrate, and encourage one another in feats of abstinence, suggesting that the market does exist, if anyone dared cater to it.

Anorexia is to most people about beauty, about body image; but if this were the whole story, then surely anorexics would display some sensitivity towards the fact that there is a stage beyond even extreme slenderness which is physically repulsive. Growing downlike hair all over the body isn't attractive, but even this symptom doesn't provide a deterrent, which it surely would if aesthetics were central. It is also important that self-starvation can be an epic exercise of the will, which is not recognized as such because it is feminine. Anorexia is pure achievement, pointless, lethal, and glorious, just like mountaineering, and both are the products of a profoundly decadent society.

But there is yet another side to the experience of hunger which helps to explain the Mulrooneys. Fasting is also unmistakably one of the

varieties of religious experience and [illegible] form of prayer, as it is to this day among Jews. "Accept my blood and fat, O Lord, as a sacrifice," they say every year at Yom Kippur. There have been strands of the Christian tradition which do more than offer the body's self-consecration as a sacrifice for God to accept or reject. There are Christian stories in which God is effectively coerced through the voluntary agony of His creatures, starting with Christ's forty days in the wilderness; the most remarkable is, again, Irish. In the medieval *Life of St. Patrick*, the patron saint of Ireland is shown as a faster on the heroic scale in a story which sets out the authentically epic character of self-starvation.

What the *Life of St. Patrick* says is that "he went to Cruachan on Saturday of Whitsuntide. An angel came to him, and said, God will not give you what you demand, because it seems to Him excessive and obstinate, and the requests are great." "Is that so?" said Patrick. "Then I will not go from here until I am dead, or till all the requests are granted to me." He then stays in Cruachan without drink and without food from Shrove Saturday to Easter Sunday—forty days and forty nights. One by one, he wrests concessions from his God. Twelve men every Saturday to be rescued from Hell. That Ireland be submerged before the Last Judgement. That the Saxons will not dwell in Ireland, that everyone who knows Patrick's hymn—no, the last three verses, it's long—will escape from Hell, a man freed at doomsday for every hair on his chasuble . . . it goes on and on. According to the value system shared by St. Patrick, God, and the angel who zips up and down between Cruachan and Heaven bearing ever more unacceptable demands, it is precisely to the extent that he has been tormented, has willingly walked in the Death Zone, that he has built up the power to coerce. His pain was comprehensible to medieval readers; so was its precise weight and significance. St. Patrick has put himself to the ultimate test of fasting to the point of near death, lonely on the hill of Cruachan with nothing but the angel of the Lord to comfort him, and a diabolical swarm of black birds swirling between him and God.

With Bobby Sands and St. Patrick as guides, I want to look at the story of Frances Jo, Catherine, and Breege-Ruth Mulrooney to see if there are ways of understanding it without turning it into fiction, because the crucial and shocking thing about this tale is that it actually happened. In the photographs which accompanied the newspaper report here in Britain, there is a glamorous Irish pathologist whose slender hands sketch eloquent arcs of incomprehension and disbelief. She might be grist for the mill of fiction, especially if what one is primarily interested in is the damage that the Mulrooneys did to their bodies. But there are also photographs of the surviving sister, in her good green coat and old lady's felt hat, a woman who looks exactly like my best friend's mother and wears the stunned expression common to those who have been crushed by bizarre and inexplicable tragedy. She was the one who got away, because she married and they closed her out, and she is a reminder that this is a story about real people.

Enter these appalling spaces. A small room, in it four bodies, people locked in private agony, cocooned in sleeping bags, each enduring as best she might the terrible pain of her body's refusal to die. Between the bags stand brimming buckets of urine; on their forty-day fast the sisters must drink, indeed their bodies will crave pint after pint of water, which they will piss out again in minutes, each flush of the kidneys taking with it salts and minerals which are not being replaced. We know this not merely from the buckets which stood among the corpses but simply from the timescale. Without water they would hardly have lasted a week, and their agony prolonged itself for more than thirty-eight days. They do not talk, but some of them write. They are taciturn, private women, great letter writers. They write letters when lesser women would scream. "None of us foresaw it could be this cruel and slow," Breege-Ruth wrote to her younger sister:

> It can deteriorate worse into a slow hell for the four of us (horrible loss of sight, great pain). Please listen. I have thought long and hard about this. Let's think of exiting ourselves humanely. . . . This is very grave. It will just get steadily worse. . . . This is an overpowering strong feeling.

A small tent, in it four bodies, people locked in private agony, cocooned in sleeping bags. They are probably, but not certainly, men, and they are at the last camp beneath the summit of Everest. The tent stinks of piss, because although they are profoundly dehydrated their bodies are leaking precious water, which they must get up and pass several times a night; even so, their urine is dark brown and concentrated, carrying with it a great deal which they cannot afford to lose. At any moment someone's lungs may start to fail, drowned in bubbles of bloody froth, or someone's oxygen-starved brain may try to solve its problems by sucking more and more blood into his head until he or she collapses and dies of a cerebral hemorrhage. They are not yet dead, in fact they are not yet in the Death Zone, they are merely camped within sight of the tollbooth, but things are bad enough. Somehow, in the state they are in, they must find the energy and the will to get up, to dress, which may take an hour or more in such conditions, and to move onward and upward. One in six of the people who have gone up

Everest died there, so the odds are against all four of them making it back to Kathmandu.

Meanwhile, what the hell is going on in Leixlip? According to an anonymous letter from a person signing as TT, Josephine Mulrooney became convinced that forty days of fasting would lead to a better life. They were hard women, the Mulrooneys. They kept to themselves, neither gave nor took. Jo had as much on her conscience as any of us, perhaps. But whatever her history with the other six deadly sins, it is beyond doubt that pride sustained this enterprise; because Josephine Mulrooney decided to bypass the usual channels, the future moment in which the mountain of her mingy little sins would be raked over by angels with the expressions of public-health inspectors, the purgatorial delousing. She would demand Heaven and straight away, slapping the payment on the counter, cash down, and the question which she poses is: Is mortal agony too much of a price to pay if you think Heaven is a fact and not a metaphor? Frances, Catherine, and Breege-Ruth, two sisters and an aunt who had always been inseparably close, saw the force of this argument, because they went along with her. Even after thirty-six days, when Breege-Ruth writes, "our stomachs are devouring themselves," she was also writing, "the idea of ascending into heaven together is a good one."

Well, then. Meanwhile, in Nepal, four exhausted, sick, confused people lumber up into the Death Zone, padded almost spherical with layers of down insulation and windproofing. In Leixlip, nothing happens—within an ordinary definition of "happens." Nobody moves, but there is terrible evidence of the despairing revolt of the will to live. For God's sake, they write, I can see all four of us go into absolute hells of excruciating death. This is too painful, too dreadful, beyond human endurance. What is most horrible, piecing the story together, is that not one of them breaks rank. They generate a despairing fantasy about pretending that Breege-Ruth has cancer; that doctors might be persuaded to provide morphine, which they could take to disguise from themselves the fundamental fact that they are being eaten alive by their own stomachs. It is more painful than any of them could have imagined or believed, and certainly they were weak, perhaps very weak. But no one shoved a note out through the letter box saying "help us," let alone broke out of the house. They held to their pristine intention.

Return now to the four rotting near-corpses at Camp Four. The choice which faces them is just as stark. If they go down, they will probably live. If they go up, they will probably die. Anyone who reaches the summit of Everest now must pass Rob Hall. One of the great climbers of the twentieth century, he came off the top in difficult conditions, having waited dangerously long for a weaker man. Four hundred feet down from the peak, he sat down and died ten feet from the lip of the South Summit; if he had got over that, the rest was downhill, and he could not do it. There is one ridge leading up to the summit, with Tibet down one sheer cliff to the east and Nepal down another sheer cliff to the west. He will sit within a few feet of where subsequent climbers must go. Rob Hall will never push up daisies, because he will not rot. The Death Zone is also the zone of eternal stasis. Those greatly favoured of God, in the Catholic tradition, are spared corruption. This is an extremely strange aspect of a religion which values the body—God incarnate, dwelling among us—as none other in the history of the world. But there is a masculine fear of corruption, the workshop of filthy creation, the rot which generates new life, and Christianity has been overwhelmingly articulated and fleshed out by men. Rob Hall is a saint of the new masculinity, his stone-hard, incorruptible corpse, gradually being eroded, skin, muscle, bone, by the savage gales which sand the snow off the peak, stands as an icon of sacred individualism, since it will yield precisely nothing; less indeed than the climbers' feces, which the thrifty Sherpas collect from Base Camp and carry down to fertilize their fields.

The four men in the tent will drag themselves past Rob Hall; they will go on. Once you have

[Invitation]

## THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

*The following note, found in a pair of secondhand pants in Oklahoma, was sent to Davy Rothbart, the creator of* Found *magazine, and will be included in* Found: The Best Lost, Tossed, and Forgotten Items from Around the World, *to be published by Simon and Schuster in May.*

Dear Family at Thornapple Lane,

Thank you so much for your input regarding the "why is the man dead with a sword in his back in the snow?" conversation between myself and my four-year-old son. I would like to help with your family's necessary counseling. Your children must need it for obvious reasons, but you as the parent might want to take me up on my offer due to allowing it to stay in your yard for days on end. This offer is genuine. Best of luck. Ted.

thirty-eight of a forty-day fast, who is to say that manly significant. Smooth as torpedoes, the Mulrooneys locked themselves into an exact, intiassumption: that they and God know the value view that dying for God is simply a form of lunacy, but even in the twenty-first century this is not a universally acceptable conclusion. Fasting against may be humanly deranged and theological Less so, perhaps, than the complete and malignant ssness of Rob Hall's death on Everest

[Correction]

## PARDON?

*From the transcript of a phone call made by Kevin B. Wyckoff to his parents, Charles and Martha Wyckoff, a few hours after they had attended his funeral on December 22. Kevin B. Wyckoff is an inmate at the Lexington Correctional Facility in Oklahoma, where he is serving a five-year sentence for offenses including kidnapping and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.*

CHARLES WYCKOFF: Hello.
KEVIN B. WYCKOFF: Hey, Dad.
CHARLES: Huh. Well damn, boy. We just had your funeral today.
KEVIN: Yeah I know, I heard.
CHARLES: Well, what the hell is going on?
KEVIN: Well, the best thing I can figure is that they had a guy, I'd say about a week ago—maybe not even a week ago—hang himself. Well anyway, they put his name in the cell where they had moved me to, and left my name down in the cell where he had hung himself.
CHARLES: Uh-huh.
KEVIN: And the only thing I can figure is they sent his body home to y'all with my name.
CHARLES: So where are you at?
KEVIN: I am in unit 9, cell 213.
CHARLES: But where?
KEVIN: Lexington. I am still in Lexington.
CHARLES: Well, just a minute. Let me go get your mom; she wants to talk to you.
MARTHA WYCKOFF: Hello.
KEVIN: Hey, Momma.
MARTHA: Kevin, I cannot believe this.
KEVIN: Wait. It's not my fault.
MARTHA: We buried you today, boy.
KEVIN: I understand that. But that's not my fault, though.
MARTHA: Whose fault is it?
It's the people that work here!
Well somebody's in deep shit.
KEVIN: Them, not me.
MARTHA: Okay. We know you're alive.
KEVIN: Yeah!
MARTHA: Okay. Somebody's in big trouble.
KEVIN: I'll tell you what happened.
MARTHA: Okay.
KEVIN: Okay. We had a guy that hung himself, okay? Well, hold on, let me start from the beginning. They moved me with a few other people over to unit 9, where I am at now, in Lexington. Okay? I was stuck in room 121 with another guy from my quad, whose name is Howe. Well anyway, they called me out of room 121 and told me to go to room 213, because another guy didn't want that room. So they switched us. But where they messed up at is, instead of putting my name down for being up in room 213, they put Howe's down. They left mine for 121. Well anyway, the guy in 121 hung himself, and since my name was on that room, that is who they thought it was.
MARTHA: Okay, Kevin. I am glad you are alive. Keep in touch, okay?
KEVIN: Yeah. The problem right now is I am still trying to find pencils and paper, and all this other good stuff.
MARTHA: Okay. We'll deal with this, okay?
KEVIN: Yeah.
MARTHA: Thank you.
KEVIN: Uh-huh.
MARTHA: Bye.
KEVIN: Bye.

[Tactics]

## WORKS EVERY TIME

*From "How to Ace an Intervention," in the Spring 2003 issue of* Modern Drunkard Magazine.

It may have already happened to you. A friend or family member invites you over for a drink, and suddenly you find yourself surrounded by the uptightest of your loved ones, trapped in an emotional ambush, pinned down with accusations that you are a *diseased* person—a person with a problem so horrifically out of control that they are *forced* to confront you and make you change.

Now, there are those who secretly welcome interventions, either out of a selfish craving for attention or out of a repressed desire to stop drink-

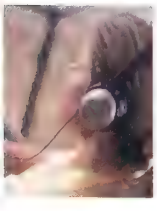
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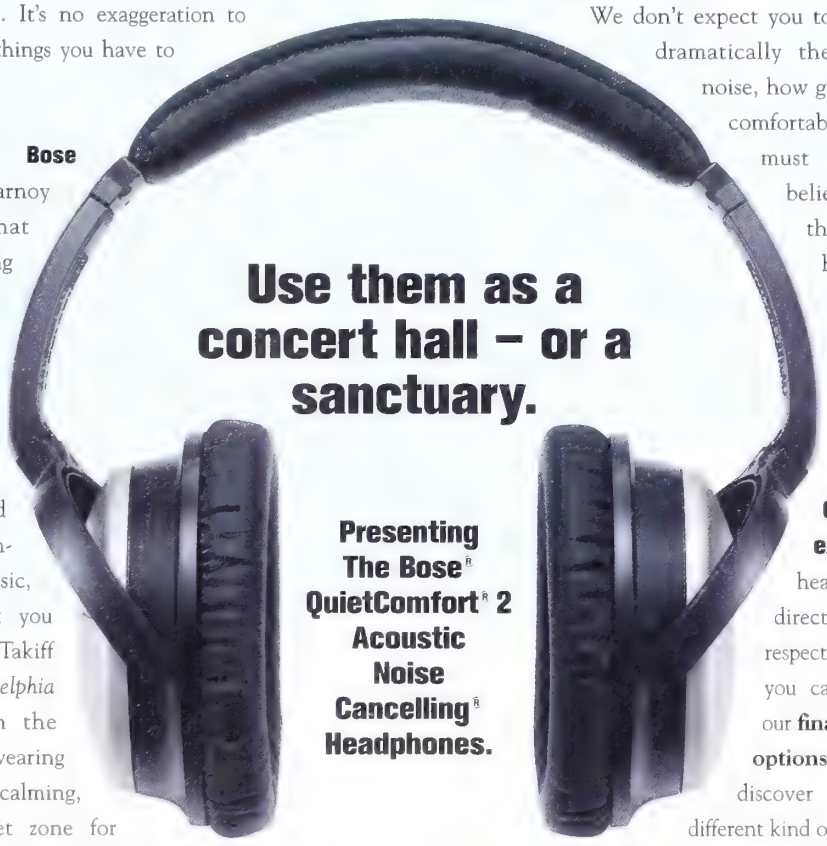

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Shadowland #1, *a Conté-crayon drawing by Joseph Stashkevetch, can be viewed at the Von Lintel Gallery, in New York City.*

ing. If you are reading this magazine, however, you are most likely neither, and that article is for you.

First off, a properly executed intervention places you at a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree disadvantage. You are caught off guard and heavily outnumbered. That doesn't mean, however, that you can't escape with your dignity intact. As a matter of fact, with proper preparation and foresight, you can not only duck the bullets but you can turn back the attack and send the opposition running for cover. Here's what to expect and, more important, how to react.

### DEMORALIZE

Not such an easy thing to do. An intervention is a sneak attack. Surprised people tend to react emotionally and attacked people tend to react defensively, and you must fight both urges. You will lose a shouting match, because there are more of them and they've already worked out their attack. Muster all your inner strength and screw an indulgent, tolerable smile onto your face. Let *them* get emotional. When you respond to their outrageous demands, speak in the quiet and emotionless voice of a tolerant child psychologist dealing with irrational and angry children. Try to end all your sentences with your opponents' first names. Answer questions with questions. It will drive them crazy.

### REVEL IN THE TRUTH

If they are following the standard intervention template, right off the bat they will insist that you admit you are an alcoholic. This is not the time to get defensive and start telling fancy lies. Once you start denying what you and they both know to be true, you've already lost the moral high ground.

Admit that you are, in fact, an alcoholic. Embrace the title and steal its power. Admit to it in the same matter-of-fact, yet modest tone you would use if Hillis, entering to being the undisputed world pickle-eating champion. No big deal. Do not present yourself as a craven and shameful victim; instead, stand tall as a reasonably proud and entirely self-aware recreational drinker. This will most likely throw them off and may even disarm them. They will have expected you to duck this punch.

GET GOD AND SCIENCE ON YOUR SIDE

Next they are likely to say: "Don't you realize the harm booze is doing to you?" This ploy was quite effective when everyone thought alcohol was an evil, unhealthy thing, but it has lost a great deal of its power in the face of the tidal wave of medical reports attesting to how alcohol is actually very good for you. Most anti-alcohol organizations still define alcoholism as having two drinks a day, which, ironically, is the minimum number even the FDA confesses will cut your risk of heart disease by 30 percent and extend your life by three to ten years.

If they try swinging the Bible onto their side, remind them that Jesus turned water into wine, not the other way around. And be sure to memorize this: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." (Proverbs 31:6–7)

MAKE THEM RESPECT YOUR INDIVIDUAL PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The interventionists' strongest, most difficult-to-repel attack is expressed in a single question: "Do you realize how your drinking is affecting those around you?" Now, if your drinking actually is stealing food from the mouths of your many weeping children or gives you the uncontrollable urge to wrap your car around the nearest tree, you're in trouble. You have no defense at all and should march arm in arm with them to the substance-abuse clinic of their choice.

However, if they are talking about how you are adversely affecting the lives of fully grown adults who you do *not* keep locked in your basement, and you know better than to drive drunk, you can tell them all to go to hell. If they don't like the way you live your life, they can clear out at the first sight of you hoisting a highball.

COUNTERATTACK

Now it's time to launch your own attack. The only people bold enough to conduct an intervention are those who consider themselves very close to you, so most likely you will know more than a little about their habits. And *everyone* has bad habits. Attack these flaws with a strident, yet deeply concerned tone. If one of them is overweight, point out that being obese is very bad for the heart and that he is putting his life in great jeopardy. If one of them smokes, point out the dangers of secondhand smoke, and remark that at least when you're drinking you don't go around spitting bourbon into people's mouths. If one of them drives an SUV, inform her that she is selfishly destroying the environment and the future of her children. If one smokes pot or uses other drugs, ask him why he would take away your perfectly *legal* means of killing stress and adding pleasure to life. Get on your feet and ask if you have the right to force them to change *their* personal habits.

The last thing these types of people want to do is look into the unforgiving mirror of their own shortcomings. The intervention will deflate into a dejected co-support group, and that will be the end of it.

[Exercise]

# THE GREAT STONEWALL

*The following essays were submitted last November by freshmen at the University of Ningxia, China, to their English teacher, Morten Skovdal, who asked them to write for ten minutes on the topic "If I was gay . . ." The essays were posted on worldisround.com.*

I can't imagine the days when I was gay, I think that's my grief. People won't accept the gay. If I was gay, my family will feel very shy of me, or separate me, or won't allow me to the outside. They will take me to the mental hospital, which can make me want to die.

I may can't stay at school, the teacher and students may feel afraid of me. They'll run away when they see me.

Well, I can't live a happy life if I was gay, the only way for me is to die, so I can go to paradise, I may find myself again.

Zhang Yini

I think my lifestyle should be normly if I was a gay. I wasn't accept gay, but last year I studied in a preparatory course. And there was a girl in my class. And then, I know something about gay. I was very strange about it. But when I get in touch with her, I know she has not difference from others except she likes girls. And now she is my friend.

So I think we shouldn't use unusual eyes to see them. They were equal like anyone, though people were very mind about this.

Alice

If I was gay, I can't live like normal people. I will lose my friends, my parent break away from me.

My mind is regret. So that at last I can't bear and kill myself. I am so young that I never think of growing up my life.

So at all. I think I won't become a gay.

I hate gay.

Anonymous

[illegible] unhealthy [illegible] dressed, looking for gays. But, [illegible] formal [illegible] they [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

ruined my reputation!" If his wife hadn't been there, he would have killed me.

I was in so much pain that I couldn't sleep. When the morning call to prayer sounded, I ran away. I said to myself, "I'll go find my mother's sister. I'll go back to my hometown. I'll find a husband and be free from all of them."

It was nighttime when I got to the southern bus terminal, and the tickets were sold out. I didn't have much money, so I went into the bathroom, where a few other girls were sleeping. I had just started to fall asleep when a loud sound awakened me. The religious police were conducting a raid, and they took us all to the police station. From there we were sent to court. I couldn't understand a word of what the judge was saying. I was sleepy. I wanted to tell him what had happened, but I couldn't. In the end he gave me a sentence: eighty lashes and a 30,000 toman fine [thirty-five dollars].

When they whipped me, it hurt. My stomach hurt, my feet burned. At first, I screamed out loud. Then I just bit down hard on the edge of my chador. I was an idiot. I was only sixteen years old. I was locked up for three months. I actually missed my half brother's beatings.

When they let me go, I had no money, no idea where I was. I slept in the park. Eventually, I found a pay phone and called an old neighbor of mine. She asked me where I was, and I told her. That night I was sleeping in some cardboard boxes when I heard a sound. I got up and saw it was my half brother. I laughed and called out, "Have you come looking for me?" He said, "Yes, come on, let's go." We walked toward the woods, and I saw he had a rope. I knew he was going to beat me, but I figured it couldn't be worse than the lashes, so I said to myself, "Let him beat me, then we'll go home." But instead he tied the rope to a tree, made a noose with it, and grabbed me and put my head in the noose. I couldn't breathe. I was about to die. I said, "I'm dying." He said, "Good, good." His eyes were red. When he let go of me, the branch bent, and my feet touched the ground, so I could breathe again. He ran to straighten the branch, and suddenly a light shone on us, and he ran away. The branch broke, and I fell down, choking.

The police took me to the hospital. I wanted to file charges against my half brother, but they said, "You're not legally an adult." So I went back to the streets. I started waiting until cars came by, and then going with them, and sometimes I would go with motorcyclists or even pedestrians. As long as I had a place to stay at night, the price didn't matter. It took me a while to learn what to charge. I'd put the money in a small bag, which I hid under a bridge, until there was enough to get a place for myself. So things aren't so bad right now. I haven't heard from my half brother in over a year. I never spoke to my old neighbor again. But I miss my half brother's children.

* * *

[Agenda]

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

*The following to-do list was written by Keith Michael Addy, a twenty-seven-year-old Milwaukee-area resident who confessed to having killed and dismembered a female escort in accordance with his own instructions. Police found the handwritten note in a garbage can behind Addy's house alongside his victim's bagged remains. Addy was sentenced in December to life under state control for first-degree murder and mutilating a corpse.*

1. Make the call: Hello, how R U? Do you have any girls available for Dominatrix at this time? Yes . . . Good. I would like a girl that enjoys being tied up, whipped, blindfolded, having hot wax poured on her, and wears a gauntlet . . . (Please tell her to bring these toys.) Good . . . Please tell her that my address is . . . and to go through the back door, up the stairs, and turn left to apt. #6. Thank U. (smiley face)

2. Eat 1 cup of grape nuts.

3. 1/2 hour before appointment, put dog in bathroom, put fan in room on med., light candle, turn on #12 to vol. 20, "Repeat 1" setting on pause. Turn on TV to 28 volume and pause, open back door, take out cross, robe, scrotum weight, 2 pairs gloves, coat, neck warmer, fur hat.

4. Spot mark, take off everything but robe, gloves, scrotum weight, turn on stereo and t.v.

5. Ask her name, (smiley face) then change it to "worm" for the time being. Walk her directly into room, take off her clothes, tie up . . .

6. Set 60 min. timer. Disconnect cell phone, put it in a doubled-up white bag along with all the worm's clothes, cut her in quarters and bag in black bag, take shower.

7. When timer rings, dental [illegible].

8. Go to breakers, with boots on.

9. Do laundry.

10. Go to club or library.



*"Every* Playboy *Centerfold, the Decades," by Jason Salavon. Salavon digitally overlaid images of* Playboy *centerfolds from each of the last four decades and generated point-by-point averages of each decade's photographs. His work will be on display next spring at The Project in Los Angeles.*

*How old are you?*
I'm fifteen.

*Why did you leave home?*
One day I was coming home from school when Abbas started following me, asking for alms. Every day for a week he followed me home, but I ignored him. Then one day I answered, and my brother happened to see me. He went straight to my father. That night my father beat me until my whole body was black and blue. Then he locked me in the cellar. There were rats down there. I screamed and shouted, but no one came to help me. I thought I was going to die from fright. The next day, after my father had gone to work, my sister passed a piece of bread and some cheese to me under the cellar door. For a whole month she did that every day. For a whole month I didn't wash or change my clothes. There was a pit in the cellar where I went to the bathroom. Finally, I broke a window in the middle of the night and managed to escape into the street. I had no chador, so I stole one from the mosque. I was on my way to the bus terminal when I was picked up by the police. At six o'clock in the morning, they took me back home. I was beaten again. This time my father hung me by my feet from the hook he used to hang slaughtered lambs. That night my sister cut me down. She said, "Go." I said, "He's going to kill you." She said, "You go, I'll think of something." She gave me a chador and some money. I went straight to the town square, found a ride, and came to Teheran.

*And what do you do now?*
I work in a house. The madam I work for pays me and lets me go out for walks.

*Do you want to go home?*
No. Once I called and spoke to my sister. She said that my father beat her for a week after I left, so she would tell him where I was. And my mother told her that if she sees me she'll burn me alive.

*Why?*
My mother says that since I am going to burn in the next life, it is her duty to set fire to me in this one.

* * *

*How did you end up at this house?*
When I was a kid, my parents died in a car crash. I went to live with my uncle, who had six kids. I loved his children, and my uncle's wife was kind to me, but my uncle was always angry—not just with me, with everyone, with his wife, his kids. He would beat me a lot. He said, "I already have enough troubles, and now I've got you hanging around my neck." He received all my parents' inheritance for taking care of me, but he never spent a penny on me.

I was just starting high school when Ahmad

started getting interested in me. He was good-looking. He was nice. Every day he'd follow me home. At school the other girls were jealous; everyone wanted to be friends with Ahmad. But he was only interested in me.

One day a girl said, "Stupid, show him you're interested. What if he gets tired and loses interest in you?" So the next day I looked at him. He understood. He asked my name. I answered his questions. A few days later he said, "Let's go for a walk." We went to the park, and he held my hand. He was really nice. Then he said, "Let's go to my house, I have a surprise for you there." We went to his house. No one was home.

When I realized I was pregnant I told Ahmad. He said, "How is that possible?" I said, "Let's go to the doctor." He said, "Are you crazy? What would I tell the doctor?" I asked him what I should do. He said, "There's nothing I can do about it. I still have to do military service, and I have no money. If my father were to find out, he'd kill me. If your uncle were to find out, he'd kill you. The best thing to do is kill yourself."

I cried all day, knowing that he was right. I filled a pan with oil and took it into the bathroom. I locked the door. My aunt knocked and asked, "Why is the door locked?" I said, "The air is cold, there's a draft in the bathroom." I poured the oil over my hair and clothes and I lit a match.

I was burning. My hands, my face. My body. I couldn't stop it. I began screaming. My aunt broke down the door. I don't know what happened after that. When I came to, I was in the hospital. I couldn't move. I was covered in bandages. A week later, when I was able to talk, I asked a nurse, "If someone catches on fire, will their baby die?" She asked, "Are you pregnant?" I said, "Yes." She told me my baby was alive. The next day my uncle came to the hospital with a knife. I rang the bell for the nurses, and the police came and took my uncle away.

When my burns began to heal, I was taken to the police and given eighty lashes for having an illicit relationship.

I went to a friend I had made in the hospital. My uncle had told her not to take me in, but she did. She took me to a midwife, who gave me an abortion. Then I began to work here. The woman I work for found out what I'd done and felt sorry for me. She said, "Just clean up, I won't ask more of you." It's difficult under these circumstances to work. But I'm willing, just to have a place to stay.

Look at my eyes. My uncle says that the first time he saw my eyes, he knew they were the eyes of a whore.

[Sales Pitch]

# THE HARD SELL

*From a manual for sales staff at Tri-Chem Corporation presented as evidence in a lawsuit brought last November by five former employees of the Michigan-based manufacturer of tools, industrial chemical products, and maintenance supplies. The "sexually oriented sales methods" that they claim were expected of them included sending nude calendars, provocative pictures of themselves, pornographic videotapes, and their own underwear, as well as engaging in phone sex with customers and accompanying them to topless bars.*

Women talking to men—this means control. Every time you hang up that phone, a sale has just occurred. Either he has sold you or you have sold him. It is that simple. By utilizing the steps of the pitch and techniques like alternative-choice questions, you are on the way to controlling your own destiny. There is just one more piece of the puzzle. You have a gift and might not even know it. Every woman has her own "Female Magic," and that is why you are going to be successful in this career.

***

MINI WARM-UP

The main purpose of the Mini Warm-Up is to CATCH THE PROSPECT'S ATTENTION. Don't let him off! This is where the experience starts; if you do not catch the prospect's attention within the first 10–30 seconds, it will be hard to keep him on the phone long enough for you to create a relationship. "Shock value" goes a long way.

*Hey Joe, you are a hard man to get a hold of. They must be keeping you busy all day long?*

*I guess you're the one who gets the ladies' calendar. It has pretty girls in the construction trade using our products, so I'm sending it out to you. Hey, don't look at all the pictures at once.*

Are you smiling? You better be if you want to grab his attention and keep it.

*Joe, this is ____. I want you to know something.*
*—What?*
*I want you to know I have a big smile on my face.*

*—Someone just walked into my office.*
*Well, get rid of them. I'm not done with you yet. There's a reason why I'm calling you.*

*Hey Joe, this is ____. I'm calling you so I can make sure you still want the calendar I'm on.*

***

MAJOR WARM-UP

By the end of the Major Warm-Up you

# Is much of college wasted on the young? What would a great university education mean to you now?

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There are approximately 425,000 college professors in America. In over a decade of searching, we have selected barely 100 to make The Great Courses. Why only these? Because we seek out only those professors who will make your time in the world of ideas a daily pleasure.

How do we find them? Each year we travel the country—Harvard to Stanford, UCLA to UNC—to watch hundreds of top-rated professors from America's best colleges and universities, in search of the finest.

Of the hundreds of professors we visit, only a few dozen of the very best are invited to give an audition lecture. Each audition is reviewed by hundreds of customers. We then select only those professors rated highest by our customers to make The Great Courses. More than 10,000 of our customers—educated, intelligent adults—have voted on audition lectures to select our faculty based on their teaching and lecturing skills. Members of our faculty have won many honors including the Pulitzer Prize, the Carnegie Foundation's Professor of the Year award, and Fulbright and Guggenheim Scholarships. But what matters is that they are clear, devoted scholars with a passionate zeal to teach others what their disciplines have discovered.

---

"The Teaching Company offers only brilliant teaching... lectures by the best that Harvard, Yale and other top universities have to offer."

—The Wall Street Journal

---

### The average Great Course scores 8.97 out of 10

Once a professor is selected, each course is *crafted*—not merely recorded—for the customers of The Teaching Company with the needs of intelligent, engaged adults foremost in mind. Every course is designed to be comprehensive, richly detailed, and extremely well-presented.

Recently, an outside service surveyed 3,600 of our customers and asked them to rate the course they had most recently completed on a ten point scale, where 10 is "extremely satisfying." The average course scored 8.97.

### Lifelong Learning That Fits Your Life

Where do our customers find the time to become "renaissance" people in this time-pressed age? Often, they have enriched their lives by taking back "lost" time with The Great Courses. You can use The Great Courses when you commute, exercise, or work around the house.

We once asked a heart surgeon who had watched hundreds of hours of lectures how he found the time in his career for The Great Courses. He answered, "I skip the first half hour of junk TV each evening and watch a Teaching Company lecture instead."

Another customer echoes what we have heard many times: "Since I've discovered The Teaching Company, I look forward to my driving time. Thank you for changing my commute from frustrating to fascinating." And many of our customers have made The Great Courses the cornerstone of a rewarding retirement.

### "Why the Guarantee?"

The price for shipping and handling of our products includes a lifetime satisfaction guarantee. What does this mean? It means that if a course is ever less than completely satisfying, you may exchange it for another or we will refund your money promptly.

Most publishers and booksellers do not guarantee that you will be completely satisfied with their product. We do. And we guarantee your satisfaction for a lifetime because we want you to be our customer for a lifetime of learning.

One customer published his view of our guarantee, which we have reproduced below:

> It was just a plain one mailer from The Teaching Company. They offer taped lectures by prominent professors on subjects that get my heart racing. I remembered receiving mailers from this company before, though I had never purchased anything. As I glanced at this one, though, something caught my eye. They offered a lifetime satisfaction guarantee on every tape in their catalog.
>
> What? I had to read that again. But there it was right on the front page and again on the order form:
>
> **LIFETIME SATISFACTION GUARANTEE.**
>
> To understand how powerful this is, keep in mind what this company sells. These aren't little audio tapes with 30 minutes of fluff, they're HUGE, in-depth taped lectures from some of the best minds in the country.
>
> When I saw the guarantee, I was sold. Where's my credit card?
>
> But there's another reason for the guarantee - ethics. Thomas Rollins, president of The Teaching Company, said his company values clients so much, he simply doesn't want them to have any product they don't absolutely love. In our lively phone conversation, he said, "We call our lectures The Great Courses, and if we don't deliver great courses, we don't deserve the money."
>
> Wow! Most people think of customer loyalty as customer being loyal to a business. But how about a business being loyal to customers?"

—Dean Rieck,
Direct Marketing magazine
April 2000

### About Value

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*The Signing of the Declaration of Independence*, detail, by John Trumbull.

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and out what he's interested in, don't be too quick to change the subject. Stick with it until you can make him feel warm and fuzzy.

*So, when you're not slaving for work, what do you do for fun in _____?*

*I've never been to Alabama. What's it like there? Is it mountains or flatland? What do you do there, hunt or fish?*

Have great stories to tell. Always have weekend plans that are fun to talk about (bikini ski contest for charity, you model part-time for Budweiser, etc.).

You must give him a piece of yourself.

***

TRANSITION TO PRODUCT PITCH

Once you have made a friend, it's important not to lose track of why you are calling. You do not want to waste time creating a friend without reciprocity.

*You're so much fun to talk to, I almost forgot why I called. I want to make you my customer so we can talk all the time.*

If he wants to get off the phone, DON'T LET HIM. You just did the hard part.

*You're not getting away from me that quick. I'm not done with you yet.*

You have invested your time in finding out his hotspots and sharing yours; this is your time to make the relationship pay off.

***

Get small commitments throughout the entire conversation—it's easier to get a purchase order if he has committed to small things earlier.

If your prospect is not responding positively, it's time to go back to a Major Warm-Up.

*Remember the calendar I told you about? I have another one. I'm also going to send you my picture—that way you'll know who you're dealing with.*

***

This is your business. You get out what you put in. Do you want to own a Dollar Store or Saks Fifth Avenue?

How bad do you want it? You better know the answer to this question right now. Tri-Chem can make your dreams reality. You want a new car . . . Yes! You want to be self-sufficient . . . Yes! You want a new home . . . Yes! Only if you respect yourself enough to settle for nothing less.

[Mores]

# CLEARING CUSTOMS

*From www.immihelp.com, a website offering advice to Indian immigrants to the United States. The entries below were submitted to the site's Experiences section, written by recent arrivals and intended as a service to newcomers.*

Don't be rushed to always buy something whenever you see sale at some store. Here in U.S. there is always some or other kind of sale going on in the name of different festivals, holidays, etc.

I have seen sale at barber's shop HAIR CUT SALE: $2.99, or when the housing market was not doing good, sale at apartment complexes such as VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL: $100 OFF/MONTH.

Tarun Saxena, Clearwater, Fla.

Whenever you are standing in line, remember to keep enough distance between you and the person standing in front of you, else they might get offended. Do not stand too close.

Vijay Deshmukh, Cupertino, Calif.

You should not drive your car beyond speed limit. You may not immediately see police officer, he/she may be hiding behind a tree, or any other place where you cannot see him/her. But he/she might have laser gun or radar that will measure your car speed. If police officer catches you speeding, he will come after you with sirens and with blue/red color lights blinking. That is the indication that you must stop the car on the right side of the road and wait inside. Do not try to come outside your car else police officer may think that you may attack him/her and may also shoot you probably.

Chintan Seth, Morristown, N.J.

In U.S., pink color is associated with girls, and blue color is associated with boys. That is, boys should not wear pink clothes.

There are some colors like green, yellow, that are unisex. Anyone can wear clothes of those colors.

Guys should not wear pink-color shirt else he may be mistaken for "Gay."

Kishore Shahani, Memphis

If you offer chewing gum or any other mouth freshener, it can easily be mistaken that he/she has bad breath, even though your intention may not be such.

Yogesh Shah, Parlin, N.J.

There are grooves on the sides of many roads. That mandates you to drive your car in

the middle of the road. As soon as you start driving your car to the side of the road, car starts making noise as it runs on the grooves. You realize at that time to bring the car back to the middle of the road.

Seema Mathur, Vienna, Va.

For your dishwasher always use detergent specifically made for that. Don't use dish-cleaning soap, as it will generate a lot of foam and spill out of dishwasher and you will have hard time cleaning your kitchen floor.

Suchitra, N.J.

While you are driving your car, never throw any garbage out of your car onto the road. You would be fined for littering, and that fine may be as high as $1,000.

I know of an incident where a family had recently arrived from India. They had small baby. While in car, baby had to do potty. Mother cleaned potty and threw it outside. Incidentally, police car was coming just behind their car and potty was all over the police car! They were stopped and police officer was very angry. Luckily, police officer figured out that these people had just recently arrived in U.S., and he was very kind to let them go. But this is an exception, and in most cases you would be fined.

Sanjay Suri, Atlanta

As Columbus started going in west direction for search of India and when hit the North America, he thought that was India. Therefore, he called the natives of North America as "Indians."

Sometimes, we *desis* are referred as "Asian Indian" or "Eastern Indian." Natives of America are referred as "American Indian." You should never call them "Red Indian," as it would be offending.

Similarly, you should never call a black person "black," or "negro," or "nigger." Proper way to refer to them is to use the word "African American," as they are originally from Africa and they were either brought to America or came to America on their own.

Vivek Grover, Pasadena, Calif.

You should not walk or sit with arms around shoulders of any person of the same gender, no matter how close friend he/she is, else people might mistakenly think about you that you are "Gay" or "Lesbian."

Srinivas Konderu, Pittsburgh

In front of Americans, you should never talk in your native language, as they don't like it because they don't understand it and therefore they think you might be hiding something from them.

Sumit Sethi, Edison, N.J.

[Petition]

# G–D DAMN HIPSTERS

*From a prayer distributed in January by Hasidic Jews at a demonstration in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Between 1990 and 2000 the median monthly rent in the area increased by 67 percent, more than anywhere else in New York City. Williamsburg is reputed to be home to the highest density of artists in the world. Translated from the Hebrew by Steven I. Weiss.*

FOR THE PROTECTION OF
OUR CITY OF WILLIAMSBURG
FROM THE PLAGUE OF THE ARTISTS

Master of the Universe, have mercy upon us and upon the borders of our village and do not allow the persecution to come inside our home; please remove from upon us the plague of the artists, so that we shall not drown in evil waters, and so that they shall not come to our residence to ruin it.

Please place in the hearts of the homeowners that they should not build, God forbid, for these people, and strengthen their hearts so that they can withstand this difficult test and so that they will not sell for the lure of money.

Please, our Father God of Mercy, have mercy upon our generation that is weak, and remove this difficult test from these people, these immoral antagonists that by their doing will multiply, God forbid, the excruciating tests and the sight of the impurity and immorality that is growing in the world.

And here we live in fear that owing to the encroachment of these individuals upon our community we will not be able to teach our sons and daughters according to the methods of Israel.

Please, our Father of Mercy, for the sake of our fathers and our sages who gave their lives to allow religion to remain upon the lowly American soil, and for the sake of their merit, preserve the residence, do so for your love of those who came from the dust. Please, our Father of Mercy, do not give the aggressor the portion that you have acquired and that you have freed from slavery with your great strength.

And we know also, we know that we have no strength other than our mouths, and if we have brought on a decree from you, please repeal this harsh decree, because we lack strength and may not be able to withstand this difficult test, God forbid.



[censored out]

# THIS AMERICA

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

The more I think of that the more I disagree with it, and the more puzzled I become about the workings of the mind that produced it.

I know and can read the First Amendment as well as anyone. I know it is the basic law of this country. I know that it protects all will say. The Warren court has carefully and precisely outlined the exact method by which persons can [illegible] Last summer the court had decided to provide viewers with a textbook on how to avoid burning [illegible]

Here the court has presented me with a dilemma that beats the best of all philosophers and refuses to be solved. The dilemma has been embodied in the Supreme Court and yet I do not see principle and you that by [illegible] to them and your will be [illegible] than you presently are.

Here the problem shows. Not comparison [illegible] communities, one community law, one law, equal in movie or no movie, [illegible] the Supreme Court to choose that does every [illegible] every minute of every sentence.

What is it then who compels us to inform [illegible] communities keep and conscience and [illegible] we can name and give them names and [illegible] ourselves. What is it that drives us [illegible] we [illegible] the community and does [illegible] ourselves [illegible]?

[illegible] the law of the community [illegible] who compels [illegible]

ing can only be the employer himself. It is he, and not the committee, who applies the only lash that really stings—economic reprisal: he is the enforcer who gives the committee its only strength and all its victories.

Disliking the nasty business of blacklisting but nonetheless practicing it every day of his life, he places upon his country and his flag the blame for moral atrocities that otherwise would be charged directly to himself. And thus, since informing has nothing to do with the law and the country and the flag, and since the necessities of his life, as he sees them, oblige him to enforce what the committee can never compel, and since without his enforcement the committee would have no power at all—what he actually said is that *he* is the law and the country and the flag.

Thinking back to our producer and his concept of country and flag, I am more than ever bewildered. I wonder if he has really seen this country, if he has really seen these American people, if he has really seen that flag. If he has, and his conclusions are honest, he has seen something I never imagined and don't believe exists.

I've delivered newspapers, reported for newspapers, peddled vegetables, clerked in stores, waited on tables, washed automobiles, picked fruit, hosed down infected cadavers, shoveled sugar beets, iced refrigerator cars, laid rails with a section gang, and served an eight-year hitch on the night shift of a large industrial plant.

I've looked at many American faces. I've seen them as flak burst around them nine thousand feet over Japan; in a slit trench on Okinawa watching the night sky to see where the next bomb would fall; in an assault boat as they moved toward a beach that tossed more violently than the surf through which they rode.

I've counseled with a paroled prostitute on how she might escape the clutches of a policeman who had caught her and was stealing half her earnings and sending his friends to her with courtesy cards that entitled them to take her without pay. I've also counseled with Secretary of the Air Force Tom Finletter on how the secretary of state might better explain his policies to a perplexed people. I've been asked by Louis B. Mayer why I had no religion, and by a ranking member of the State Department how I could bring myself to work with "all those Hollywood Jews."

I've seen American faces in a miners' union hall in Duluth on a night when the wind off the lake blew the snow so killingly and so deep that cars couldn't be used and everybody walked to the meeting. I've seen their faces in the banquet room of a New York hotel when the American Booksellers' Association gave me a National Book Award; and I've seen them again in a jury box as each of them twice said, "Guilty as charged," and one of them wept as she said it.

I've been stripped by Americans and paraded naked with them and before them and obediently bent over on command to present my anus for contraband clearance. I've lived with and trusted and been trusted by car thieves and abortionists and moonshiners and embezzlers and burglars and Jehovah's Witnesses and Quakers.

I've stood on a gray day in the Fifth Marine Division Cemetery on Iwo Jima and looked off at the graves of 2,198 Americans. In the center of all those graves on a slim white pole on a concrete pedestal flew the American flag. And I swear it was not the flag of informers. And if I could take a census of all the American faces I have seen and of all the dead whose graves I have looked on, if I could ask them one simple question: "Would you like a man who told on his friend?"—there would not be one among them who would answer, "Yes."

Show me the man who informs on friends who have harmed no one, and who thereafter earns money he could not have earned before, and I will show you not a decent citizen, not a patriot, but a miserable scoundrel who will, if new pressures arise and the price is right, betray not just his friends but his country. Such men are to be watched; I cannot imagine they are *not* watched.

There are certain men of my time who have waged great battles and now look out upon the world from hilltops or from peaks where the horizon must be immensely wider and more revealing. But I, who have only skirmished, stand on a ridge, lower than I had hoped for and yet perhaps higher than I deserve. The horizons I had thought to see will probably be denied.

I still hope that I shall be able to ascend one of the middle hills. Be that as it will be, even from my ridge I look back on two decades through which good friends stood together, moved forward a little, dreamed that the world could be better and tried to make it so, tasted the joy of small victories, wounded each other, made mistakes, suffered much injury, and stood silent in the chamber of liars.

For all of this I am grateful: that much I have; that much cannot be taken from me. Barcelona fell, and you were not there, and I was not there, and perhaps if we had been the city would have stood and the world would have been changed and better. But we were here, and here together we remain, and our city won't fall, and if it should, better that we lie buried in its ruins than be found absent a second time.

Salud!
Trumbo

# IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three

uno, dos, tres

un, deux, trois

一、二、三

eins, zwei, drei

אחת, שתיים, שלוש

jeden, dwa, trzy

एक, दो, तीन

moja, mbili, tatu

일, 이, 삼

een, twee, drie

один, два, три

uno, due, tre

unus, duo, tres

یو، دوه، درې

in any of these languages

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# THE COLLAPSE OF GLOBALISM

## And the rebirth of nationalism

*By John Ralston Saul*

Grand economic theories rarely last more than a few decades. Some, if they are particularly in tune with technological or political events, may make it to half a century. Beyond that, little short of military force can keep them in place.

The wild open-market theory that died in 1929 had a run of just over thirty years. Communism, a complete melding of religious, economic, and global theories, stretched to seventy years in Russia and forty-five years in central Europe, thanks precisely to the intensive use of military and police force. Keynesianism, if you add its flexible, muscular form during the Depression to its more rigid postwar version, lasted forty-five years. Our own Globalization, with its technocratic and technological determinism and market idolatry, had thirty years. And now it, too, is dead.

Of course grand ideologies rarely disappear overnight. Fashions, whether in clothes or food or economics, tend to peter out. Thousands of people have done well out of their belief in Globalization, and their professional survival is dependent on our continued shared devotion to the cause. So is their personal sense of self-worth. They will be in positions of power for a few more years, and so they will make their case for a few more years. But the signs of decline are clear, and since 1995 those signs have multiplied, building on one another, turning a confused situation into a collapse.

We have scarcely noticed this collapse, however, because Globalization has been asserted by its believers to be inevitable—an all-powerful god; a holy trinity of burgeoning markets, unsleeping technology, and borderless managers. Opposition or criticism has been treated as little more than romantic paganism. It was powerless before this surprisingly angry god, who would simply strike down with thunderbolts those who faltered and reward his heroes and champions with golden wreaths. If Globalization has seemed so seductive to societies built upon Greek and Judeo-Christian mythologies, perhaps the reason is this bizarre confusing of salvation, fatalism, and punishment. Transferred to economics, in however jumbled a manner, these belief systems are almost irresistible to us.

*John Ralston Saul is the author of* Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West *and, most recently,* On Equilibrium: The Six Qualities of the New Humanism.

In a society where Christian dogma had been so dominant until so recently, how could people of goodwill not be attracted by this good news—by these promises of personal redemption? And if you add to all of this a multitude of new, technocratic market methods—well, then, the cycles of history would be broken, setting us on a permanent, inevitable course. In the words of a particularly naive believer, history would die. History was already dead.

Globalization materialized in the 1970s from the sort of geopolitical vacuum or fog that appears whenever a civilization begins to change direction, to grope its way around a corner from one era to another. In geopolitics, a vacuum is not an option. It is the period between options; an opportunity, providing you can recognize it for what it is; a brief interregnum during which individuals can maximize their influence on the direction of their civilization.

What caused that particular void? Perhaps a quarter century of social reform had left the liberal elites exhausted. The need to manage a multitude of enormous new social programs that had been put in place in a democratic manner—an ad hoc manner—made it difficult for political leaders to concentrate on the main line; that is, to concentrate on a broad sense of the public good. Instead, governments were caught up in the endless and directionless details of management. Or perhaps the cause of the

vacuum was the resulting reliance of those political elites on technocrats, who understood little of public debate—in fact, distrusted it—and so drew the leaders into isolation.

In either case, most Western leaders seemed confused about what to do next. They had come to the end of a chapter of social progress. And they could not have been less prepared for a religious counterattack upon their ethical motivations, particularly not one in which the classic Judeo-Christian ideas of the sacred had been converted into economic inevitabilities.

These theoretically new economic ideas were now scarcely recognizable as the simplistic economic arguments of pre-1929. The religious fervor had been blended with sparkling waves of new technology and with masses of microeconomic data, all presented as fact. Relaunched in this way, as three in one, one in three, the old ideas *seemed* new.

Caught up as the liberal elites were in the instrumental rationality of program management, they responded to this attack with superior, stolid, and unimaginative rejection. Instead of speaking out for the public good, they defended administrative structures. The effect was to make tired and discredited market arguments seem young and agile and modern.

One comic sign of the coming era was the creation, in 1971 in a Swiss mountain village called Davos, of a club for European corporate leaders. There they could examine civilization through the prism of business. Soon businessmen were coming from around the world. Then government leaders and academics flooded in, looking for investors. Business leaders, politicians, and academics alike seemed to accept without question the core tenet of Davos: that the public good should be treated as a secondary outcome of trade and competition and self-interest.

Davos was just a weather vane, a superficial and self-important version of a royal court, but when the G6—now the G8—was created in 1975, its aim mimicked that of Davos: to bring the leaders of the biggest national economies together to examine the world through the prism of economics. Never before had the great nations so explicitly and single-mindedly organized their core relationship around naked, commercial self-interest, without the positive and negative counterweights of social standards, human rights, political systems, dynasties, formal religions, and, at the negative extreme, supposed racial destinies. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the French president who organized the first G6 meeting at his official country residence, Rambouillet, was the very model of the European technocratic economist. And his approach dominated.

But what actually opened the door to Globalization was the economic collapse of 1973—the depression that never was. The reigning technocratic obsession with management and control meant that we all had to be reassured. So we were told that this was just a recession. Then there was another recession, then another, and on and on, always minimized, always about to be resolved. The social reformers, who dominated within almost all political parties and governments, denied themselves the right to stand back and deal with the situation as a whole. They had lost the intellectual breadth and the emotional balance to do this. And so they gradually lost their right to lead.

As for the new force or ideology that came forward to fill the vacuum, it involved an all-inclusive strategy called Globalization—an approach that contained the answer to every one of our problems. It was delightfully seductive. It contained simple, sweeping solutions and, as with all successful religions, lodged ultimate responsibility in invisible, untouchable hands. Thus Globalization required no one to take responsibility for anything.

This transcendent vision quickly filled the vacuum. I first heard the variety of personal passivity produced by this belief system on French national television in a speech by Giscard d'Estaing. He had been elected as a new-style political leader—a brilliant economist. Modern. Almost postmodern. He was to lead society via

AS WITH ALL SUCCESSFUL RELIGIONS, GLOBALIZATION LODGED ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY IN INVISIBLE, UNTOUCHABLE HANDS



Illustrations by Edward del Rosario

Social reformers restructured their own arguments until their basic assumptions were the same as those of their opponents.

the economy. But he came in just after the 1973 collapse, which included high inflation and unemployment. After a year or so of struggling with the collapse, Giscard went on television to tell people that great global, indeed inevitable, forces were at work. There was therefore little that he could do. Nation-states were powerless.

This was the beginning of the mania for public declarations of impotence by democratically elected leaders. Globalization became their excuse for not dealing with difficult issues, for not using their levers of power and large budgets to effect. They made the forces of inevitability credible.

Globalization had brilliant proponents—Mrs. Thatcher first among them, and economists like Milton Friedman, but also growing waves of new-style managers and consultants. These people had a multiplicity of roles. They briefed public- and private-sector leaders, organized the structures that implement policies, and ran these structures on a day-to-day basis. And their basic theory was—is—that modern methodology is universal. What's more, these methods are preferable to the untidy business of democratic argument and personal will, whether that is a matter of personal opinion or personal choice. In other words, they were engaged in the classic struggle to promote method over opinion; that is, form over content.

And so, as always happens when form is dominant, a variety of ideal experiments were undertaken. Around the world, civil services were shrunk, public and private sectors deregulated, markets released, taxes cut, public budgets balanced. Corporations began growing in size by merging and remerging. This Gigantism was considered necessary for success in a new world market. Trade grew by an astonishing multiple of twenty. European economic integration accelerated. New Zealand, the original social democratic model state, did a complete flip in the mid-eighties and attempted to become the perfect Globalized nation-state. The economies of Canada and the United States were rapidly integrated after the signing of the Free Trade Agreement in 1988, to which the integration of the Mexican economy was added with the signing of NAFTA.

Social reformers, for their part, restructured their own arguments until their basic assumptions were the same as those of their opponents. Social democrats and liberals almost everywhere became Globalists, but of a kinder, gentler sort.

Government after government, as if in a fit of moralism, legislated away its right to take on debt or collect new taxes, even though both of these were fundamental governmental powers, central to the construction and maintenance of democracies. In fact, debt and taxes had played the same fundamental role in the pre-democratic period. At the same time, the private sector invented myriad new debts and privatized taxes for itself. Everything from junk bonds to credit cards was treated as an unregulated privatized currency. And corporations used the old default mechanism more than ever to clear their own decks whenever it was handy to do so.



The sin of public debt was then broadened by attributing it to public utilities. Running well or not, they had to be privatized and deregulated into a global marketplace to cleanse them of public-sector inefficiencies. This led in turn to the large utility-style private businesses, such as airlines, being freed of regulatory restraints to satisfy a moral version of individualism that

promised, for example, the right to travel, cheaper fares, greater choice, more destinations.

From the early 1970s to late in the century, multiple binding international economic treaties were put in place, while almost no counterbalancing binding treaties were negotiated for work conditions, taxation, the environment, or legal obligations. For 250 years the painful job of building the modern nation-state had depended on a continual rebalancing of binding rules for both the public good and self-interest. Now this balance was tipped violently one way by simply shifting much of our economic power out into the global marketplace.

With economic power denationalized and transnationals using the new unregulated debt and currency systems to accumulate a financial worth greater than that of most nation-states, the next logical step was to think of those transnationals as new nations unto themselves—virtual nations, freed of the limitations of geography and citizens, freed of local obligations, empowered with the mobility of money and goods. Better in every way.

GLOBALIZATION, A METAPHOR FOR CHOICE, WAS ORGANIZING ITSELF AROUND CORPORATE STRUCTURES THAT SOUGHT PROFITS BY LIMITING CHOICE

This quarter-century rise of Globalization peaked in 1995 when the old system of international trade agreements—known collectively as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT—was reconceived as a new powerful body, the World Trade Organization. It was the last triumph. There was nothing remarkable about the creation of the WTO. It was just a centralized body to deal with commercial trade issues—not a bad thing in and of itself. The important point was the context. The reconceptualization of civilization through the prism of economics had reached a critical barrier. Beyond that barrier any international exchange that involved a commercial element would be treated as *fundamentally* commercial. Culture would be seen as a mere matter of industrial regulation; food, as a secondary outcome of agricultural industries.

What particularly caught public attention around the world was the idea that national health and food rules would be treated not as the expression of a people concerned about what sorts of things it put in its collective stomach but rather as mere protectionism—unless backed by the hardest of hard scientific evidence. That sort of evidence was usually decades in coming. The precautionary principle and the citizen's opinion were thus to be thrown aside in favor of an absolutist theory of commercial exchange.

This determinist approach toward agriculture as an industry rather than as a food source—toward the implications of everything from fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides to genetics, hormones, antibiotics, labeling, and sourcing—became the flash point for a far broader concern among citizens. This was the context in which a growing percentage of people judged the handling of key issues as different as mad cow disease, the availability of pharmaceuticals in the developing world, and global warming. They were beginning to feel that what was presented as an argument of Globalism versus protectionism was often just a confused opposition of personal choice and abstract corporate interests. So Globalization, put forward as a metaphor for choice, was organizing itself around not consumers but corporate structures, structures that sought profits by limiting personal choice.

Soon people began to notice other contradictions in the Global orthodoxy. How could the same ideology promise a planetary growth in democracy and yet a decline in the power of the nation-state? Democracy exists only inside countries. Weaken the nation-state and you weaken democracy.

Why did an unprecedented increase in money supply translate into a dearth of money for public services? And why did this growth in new monies enrich mainly those who already had money? Why did it lead to a growth in the rich-versus-poor dichotomy and a squeezing of the middle

THE CRUCIFIXION THE[illegible]
ECONOMICS HELD THAT [illegible]
[illegible] TO BE KI[illegible]
AND SOCIALLY IN ORDER [illegible]
REBORN CLEAN AND HEALTHY

Why did many privatizations of public utilities neither improve services nor lower costs for consumers but instead guarantee revenues to the [illegible] owners while leading to a collapse in infrastructure investment?

People noticed that the financial value of the great breakthroughs in female employment had somehow been inflated away. Abruptly, a middle-class family *required* two incomes. They noticed that in a mere twenty-five years CEO salaries in the United States had gone from 39 times the pay of an average worker to more than 1,000 times. Elsewhere the numbers were similar. And the savings from the cutbacks in civil servants was more than offset by the cost of new lobbyists and consultants.

There were three particularly obvious signs that Globalization would not deliver on its promises. First, the leadership of a movement devoted to "real competition" was made up largely of tenured professors, consultants, and technocrats—that is, private-sector bureaucrats—managing large joint-stock companies. Most of the changes they sought were aimed at reducing competition.

Second, the idea of transnationals as new virtual nation-states missed the obvious. Natural resources are fixed in place, inside nation-states. And consumers live on real land in real places. These are called countries. The managers and professors who waxed enthusiastic about the new virtual corporate nations were themselves resident citizens and consumers in old-fashioned nation-states. It would be only a matter of time before elected leaders noticed that their governments were far stronger than the large corporations.

Finally, the new approach to debt—public versus private, First World versus Third World—revealed a fatal confusion. Those who preached Globalization couldn't tell the difference between ethics and morality. Ethics is the measurement of the public good. Morality is the weapon of religious and social righteousness. Political and economic ideologies often decline into religious-style morality toward the end. But Globalization had shoved ethics to the side from the very beginning and insisted upon a curious sort of moral righteousness that included maximum trade, unrestrained self-interest, and governments alone respecting their debts. These notions were curiously paired with something often called family values, as well as an Old Testament view of good and evil.

It somehow followed that if countries were in financial trouble, they were moral transgressors. They had to discipline themselves. Wear hair shirts. Embrace denial and fasting.

This was the crucifixion theory of economics: you had to be killed economically and socially in order to be reborn clean and healthy. For a quarter century, under the severe hand of the International Monetary Fund, this moralizing and emotionally charged approach has been applied to the developing world with absolutely no success. Oddly enough, it had been presented as a form of cool, detached utilitarianism. Those who applied the theory seemed to fail the basic philosophical test of functioning intelligence and ethics—the ability to imagine the Other. They simply insisted, as developing-world debts continued to rise on a roller coaster of instability, that those people must learn to act in a more predictable manner.

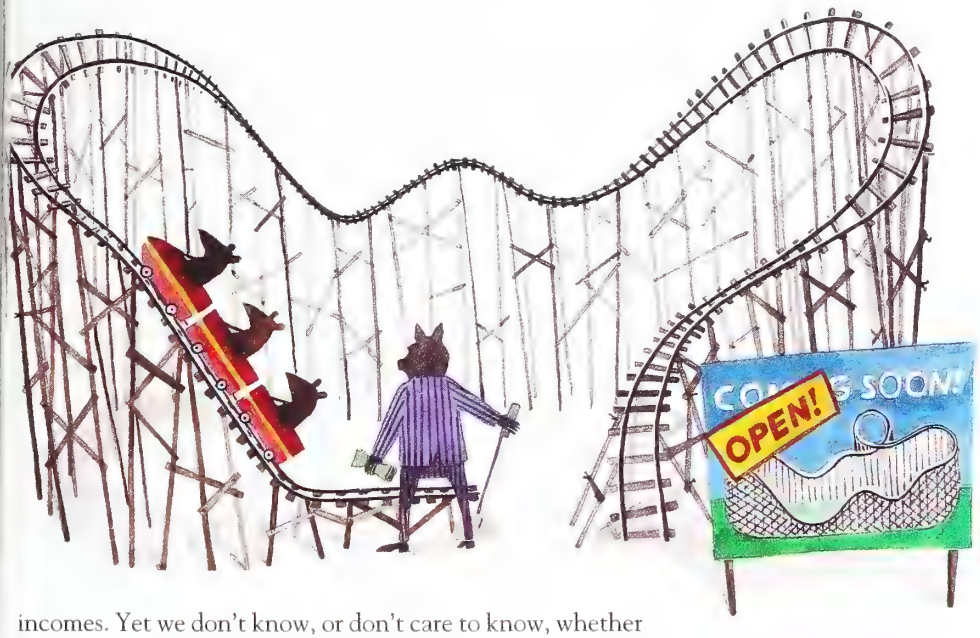
Which brings to mind rather aged priests insisting that young men should take cold showers and exercise more.

By the turn of the century, it had become clear that nationalism and the nation-states were stronger than they had been when Globalization began. Indeed, this was apparent as early as 1991, when the Yugoslavian army tried to stop Slovenia and Croatia from leaving their federation. The ensuing massacre was a test for almost every international organization. All of them failed. As if in a black comedy, international elites chattered away about how global economic forces made nation-states irrelevant, while thousands of real people were being mur-

dered and cleansed to facilitate the creation of yet more nation-states. The resulting horror shocked the Europeans into the realization that their economic and administrative Union was helpless in a political-military disaster.

Eventually Washington brokered the Dayton Peace Accords. But Dayton accepted the model of the local nationalist war criminals. Jews in Bosnia don't exist as citizens unless they pretend to belong to one of the three official races. Neither do people of mixed blood. Dayton is all about racially based nations—the most appalling aspect of nationalism, but nationalism nonetheless. And so Globalization's triumph, with the creation of the WTO in 1995, was paired with its humiliation at the Dayton signing in the same year.

In a depressing game of leapfrog, the Yugoslavian settlement competed with a genocide in Rwanda, where half a million to a million people were murdered. This is a remarkable statistic. In a global world of economic and social measurement, we are bombarded daily by apparently exact statistics measuring growth, efficiency, production, reproduction, sales, currency fluctuations, comparative levels of obesity and orgasms, divorce, salaries, and




incomes. Yet we don't know, or don't care to know, whether it was a million or half a million Rwandans who were massacred. And the genocide was facilitated by Paris and Washington, using old-fashioned nation-state powers at the U.N. Security Council to block a serious international intervention. The Rwanda catastrophe then morphed into the Congo catastrophe, involving 4.7 million deaths between 1998 and 2003. Or was it 3 million? Or 5.5?

The point is that the inevitability of global economic leadership has been irrelevant through all these crises. While the true believers speak of Globalization, we are in fact in the middle of an accelerated political meltdown marked by astonishing levels of nationalist violence.

Observant national leaders couldn't help but notice that the theories of Globalization were failing them. The most public of these failures was the breakdown of international lending and debt mechanisms. For a short period it looked as if the IMF's punishing approach might actually work. For a dozen years most Latin American governments tried to follow the instructions laid down by the IMF, Western governments, and the private banks. They endured crucifixion economics, and in many cases this

WE ARE IN FACT IN THE MIDDLE OF AN ACCELERATED POLITICAL MELTDOWN MARKED BY ASTONISHING LEVELS OF NATIONALIST VIOLENCE

tially produced apparently solid growth, even if the parallel result wa
divide. But in each case the recovery was followed, a few
later, by an even greater collapse. It turned out that such prolonged austerity had weakened, not strengthened, the social-economic fabric. So after all of the liberalizations, privatizations, and inflation-stabilization programs, growth in Latin America in the late nineties was a little over half what it had been before the reforms.

True believers will tell you that it could have worked, if only there had been less nepotism, weaker unions, or less corruption. But real economic policies in the real world don't require perfect conditions. Perfect conditions don't exist in the real world. Western growth over two centuries has come in spite of our own shifting flaws.

Peru and Bolivia are on a precipice. Argentina is picking itself up yet again, while its educated youth emigrate en masse. Now, like Brazil, it is going to try something it believes more suitable to its circumstances. Only Chile seems solid, and that is because, since the departure of Pinochet, it has carefully designed its own solutions.

In other words, Latin America no longer believes in Globalization. Neither does Africa. Nor does a good part of Asia. Globalization is no longer global. Indeed, most Western finance ministers have been quietly working for some time on partial reregulation of the markets. Why quietly? To avoid the ferocity of the true believers.

In 1998 the governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, I. J. Macfarlane, began calling for reregulation. "More people are asking whether the international financial system as it has operated for most of the nineties is basically unstable. By now, I think the majority of observers have come to the conclusion that it is, and that some changes have to be made."

In the same year a combination of street demonstrators and distrustful ministers of finance from around the developed world killed the Multilateral Agreement on Investment negotiations, which had been aimed at a further Globalization of finance and investment. They rejected the idea of yet more business-oriented binding treaties, with no binding political or social counterweights.

At almost the same time, Malaysia responded to an economic meltdown in Asia by refusing to follow the Global rules. The government pulled its currency off the market, made it nonconvertible, pegged it just low enough to favor exports, blocked the export of foreign capital, and raised tariffs.

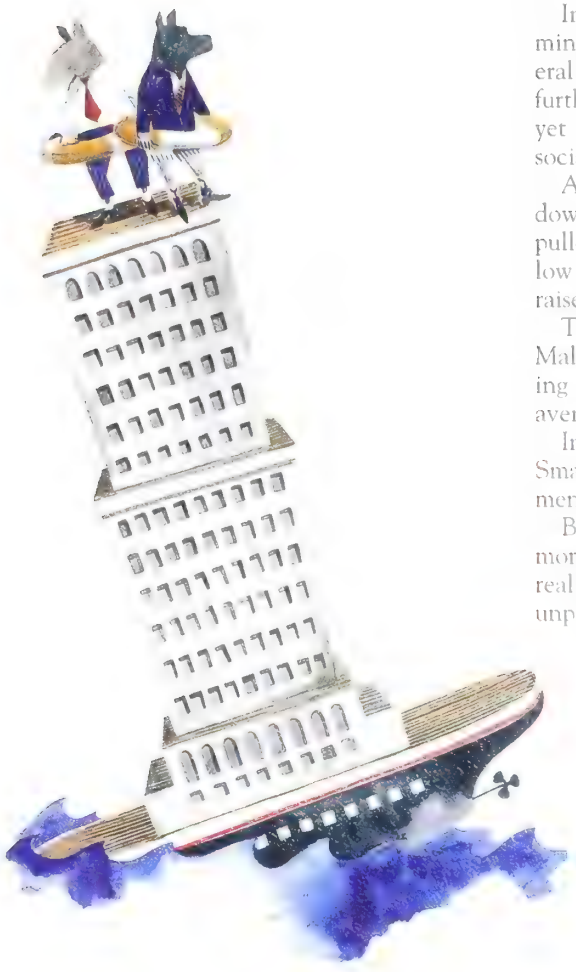
These measures were met by an explosion of Western moral fervor. Malaysia could not do this. Their economy would not survive. The leading international emerging-markets index expelled them. Then everyone averted their eyes from the inevitable collapse.

In 1999, a short year later, that same index sheepishly readmitted Malaysia. Smarter merchant bankers began to praise the possible long-term investment advantages of pegging certain currencies in certain conditions.

By then the World Bank, under new leadership, had begun to soften its monolithic Global view, even if the IMF has been extremely slow to accept reality and follow. Late in the year the WTO was humiliated in Seattle by unprecedented demonstrations.

By the end of the century it was not only national leaders who were beginning to take a more nuanced view of Globalization's capitalist credentials. A growing number of people, including the brighter business leaders, were focusing on where deregulation had worked and where it hadn't.

The airline industry, for example, had been growing since World War II. The calls for deregulation in the mid-seventies came from a successful, profitable growth sector, which continued to grow until September 11, 2001. Even then, the drop was only 5.7 percent, which, given sixty years of solid growth, should not have been a catastrophe. Yet it was. In any case, those corporations that had called for dereg-



ılation a quarter century before had pretty well all gone bankrupt, one by ɔne over the intervening years. The whole industry is now dependent on cut-ate airlines. So a sector that provides essential services is being run on du-ɔious margins and institutional instability.

Why? Because of devotion to a simplistic, monolithic model of Global mar-cet forces. But a large airplane is not a telephone or running shoes. Planes hat cost $100 million have to be paid for with $100 plane tickets—a daunt-ng business model. The secret to the industry's pre-1973 success was its stability—produced by carefully maintained, long-term public regulations.

As for the romance of Gigantism—of corporate size as a criterion for in-dustrial success—it was beginning to look pretty silly. Endless mergers had led to high levels of unserviceable debt and bankruptcy. It was as if size had replaced thought. As if it were a male thing.

It was all beginning to resemble the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centu-ry speculation markets—the South Sea Bubble, John Law and the French regency, the Dutch tulip-bulb frenzy. The larger the corporations grew, the slower and more directionless they became—enormous management struc-tures frightened of serious investment and risk. They resembled out-of-control bureaucracies. Yet the whole argument in favor of Globalization had been the apparently desperate need to wrench pow-er from the bureaucracies and place it firmly in the hands of real owners capable of taking real risks.

More perhaps than the genocides, the disorder in the streets, or the debt crises, it was those simple recurring images of corporate ineptitude, combined with an absence of self-criticism, that first made clear the decline of Globalization. How then could any of us seriously believe that our redemption lay in the reconceptualization of civilization so that we could all view it through the prism of business and economics? The larger the corporations became, the more deregulation released them to be themselves, the faster they slipped out of sync with their civilization and even with their customers and shareholders.

Of course most people in business were working away as best they could, more or less as they always had, whatever the ideology in place. The people who stumbled badly seemed to be the insistent stars of the new-world methodology. And so, in full public view, the value of the fa-bled merger of AOL and TimeWarner slipped rapidly from $284 billion to $61 billion. And GE's Jack Welch, a model new leader, began stumbling toward every last penny on the floor like a greedy little boy. Arthur An-dersen demonstrated that accountants can act as badly as anyone else. Hollinger, whose newspapers on four continents had trumpeted Global-ization, fell under multiple financial and legal investigations, as did Par-malat, the great Italian success story. And so on.

Ideology, like theater, is dependent on the willing suspension of disbe-lief. At the core of every ideology lies the worship of a bright new future, with only failure in the immediate past. But once the suspension goes, willingness converts into suspicion—the suspicion of the betrayed. Our brilliant leaders abruptly appear naive, even ridiculous.

And so, in the late nineties, our disbelief came back, and with it our memory. The years between 1945 and 1973 no longer seemed such a fail-ure. In fact, it had been one of the most successful eras in history for both social reform and economic growth. It was something to build on, to re-form; not something to dismiss.

The first clear hint of the end of the reigning ideology came with Malaysia's successful rejection of the Globalization model. We, in our fervor, saw their crisis as one of economics, and therefore subject to the rules of inevitability. The Malaysians saw it as a national political crisis with economic implications. And so they acted politically and national-ly, and were proved right. Abruptly it seemed possible that nation-states were not dying. And that economic certainty was naive.

HOW COULD ANY OF US BELIEVE THAT OUR REDEMPTION LAY IN THE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF CIVILIZATION THROUGH THE PRISM OF ECONOMICS?

[illegible] the general election in New Zealand. Fifteen [illegible] earlier this small country had become the model for Globalization. Now, overnight, its electors voted to change direction, endorsing a strong interventionist government devoted to a mix of national social policies, [illegible] economic regulations, and a stable private sector. Why? Its [illegible] had been sold off, its economy was in decline, and its standard of living had been stagnant for all fifteen years of its Globalization experiment. Its youth were emigrating at alarming rates. This, the citizens now said, was not inevitable. If a small country could flex its muscles, well, then, the nation-state was truly alive.

Then came the explosions of 2001 in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania. In the following days, the world economy began plummeting into a depression. Corporate leaders hunkered down to their businesses, forgot about world leadership, and, with a classic desire to reduce risk, slashed their investment programs, thus accelerating society's economic plunge.

As for the political leaders, ministers of finance, chairs of reserve and national banks—the constituted elites of the nation states—they rolled into action. They traveled and talked, printed money, and spent vast amounts of it. And they managed to stabilize the situation. In other words, there was a brutal, highly public, and existential reversal of roles. The governments of the nation-states took back their full power both to act and to lead. The CEOs retreated back into their historic reactive role.

Once belief is gone, the churches begin to empty. You could see this accelerating disbelief in bankruptcy court in December 2001, when, as if in the last scene of an old-fashioned bedroom farce, the "inevitability" of Global corporate leadership came face to face with Enron, filing for government protection from its private debts.

You saw it again in the opening session of the frivolous court of Davos. This was where, thirty-three years before, the theology of Globalization had been first put forward, all based on the assumption that civilization must be approached through a single, monolithic economic prism. Yet here they were on their opening day in January 2003 feting Mahathir Mohamad, the prime minister of Malaysia, for his country's economic success. It was clear to everyone that this success had come from political leadership at the nation-state level and that it was based on the rejection of Globalist economics. A few days later, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the new president of Brazil, arrived in the Swiss village to lay out an independent, straightforward version of responsible nation-state populism.

What all of this meant became perfectly clear when Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived to speak for the country that had achieved more national power than any other in history. Insofar as a possible war with Iraq was concerned, he declared, "we will act even if others are not prepared to join us." So the United States would act unilaterally—that is, nationally.

Thus, in a single week, inside the emotional and mythological home of Globalization, three very different pivotal governments turned their backs on Globalization and acted as if the nation-state were the central international reality.

The war that followed in Iraq quite intentionally put an effective end to the half-century-old Western alliance produced by the Second World War. Washington had chosen in January 2003 not to take the time to put together the traditional Western battlefield coalition. The effect was to free a cast of nations to rethink their relationships. This was as true for the old NATO players as it was for the smaller, newly free, central European states, which were able to flex their nation-state muscles by joining in. Some of them had never had such an opportunity. For others it was the first time since the 1930s.

Throughout the world, nations began moving about like semi-free agents.

Organizations such as NATO are still solid. There is no desire to storm out. But everyone is checking around to see if there are other ways they might like to act. And with whom.

What this might mean remains painfully unclear. Here we are, rushing around one of those sharp corners with no idea of where we are going. Perhaps back to the worst of old-style negative nationalism. Or perhaps on toward a more complex and interesting form of positive nationalism, based on the public good.

What is certain is that nationalism of the best and the worst sort has made a remarkable, unexpected recovery. We don't yet know whether it will become the new dominant ideology. What we do know is that there has been a return across Europe of nineteenth-century-style negative nationalism. Although usually the product of fear, it reappeared in countries that had nothing to fear: Jörg Haider in Austria speaking out against immigrants, while echoing race and monolithic national myths. Italy governed by three nationalists, one of them the leader of Mussolini's old party. Related phenomena in Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Norway, Switzerland. A sudden revival of sectarian nationalism in Northern Ireland. The defeat of a compromise in Corsica. Everywhere these nationalists are now in coalition governments or are leading oppositions.

Many mainstream parties have trimmed their sails to capture some of this nationalist vote. Non-European immigrants, who rarely account for more than 5 percent of a country's population, have become the focus for a sense of political and social impotence, produced in part by a quarter century of continental and Global inevitabilities. Today's growing fear of Muslims is paralleled by a return of anti-Semitism. The last Australian election was won by provoking a fear of immigrants. The new president of the Czech Republic is thought to be an old-fashioned nationalist, as is the governor of Tokyo. Because the United States is so powerful, people say its actions are all about empire. But empires are mere extensions of nationalism. They are not a phenomenon of either Globalization or internationalism.

At the same time, positive forms of nationalism have surged forward, with countries like South Africa and Brazil taking on the pharmaceutical transnationals over the availability of drugs to fight epidemics such as AIDS. And these countries have been winning. A reasonable number of non-economic and internationally binding treaties based on the primacy of ethics and the public good have begun to take form: the Ottawa treaty against land mines, the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto accord against global warming. They represent the beginnings of an attempt at an international balance in which the prism of civilization is neither naive market economics nor national selfishness.

The return of the idea of national power has also meant the return of the idea of *choice*—choice for citizens and choice for countries. But with choice comes uncertainty, which provokes fear. The moment we entered the post-Globalization vacuum, you could feel that fear begin to rise. And curiously enough, the greater a nation's power, the more intense the fear becomes. Perhaps power produces an expectation of certainty. Perhaps smaller countries find a certain freedom in uncertainty—the freedom to choose without being bullied. Necessity, Pitt the Younger said, is the excuse of every tyranny. For most smaller countries, Globalization has felt like an inevitability and, so, like a tyranny.

History will eventually give all of these contradictory signals a shape. But history is neither for nor against. It just is. And there is no such thing as a prolonged vacuum in geopolitics. It is always filled.

This is what happens every few decades. The world turns, shifts, takes a new tack, or retries an old one. Civilization rushes around one of those blind corners filled with uncertainties. Then, abruptly, the opportunities present themselves to those who move with skill and commitment. ■

THE RETURN OF THE IDEA OF NATIONAL POWER HAS MEANT THE RETURN OF THE IDEA OF CHOICE, CHOICE FOR CITIZENS AND CHOICE FOR COUNTRIES

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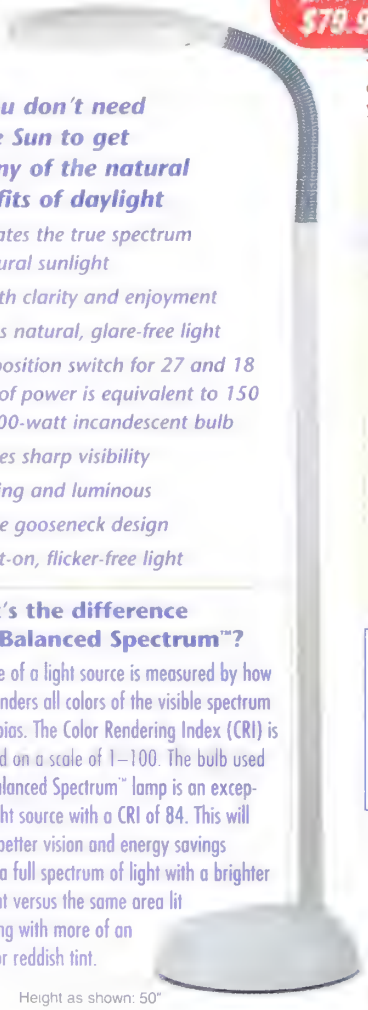
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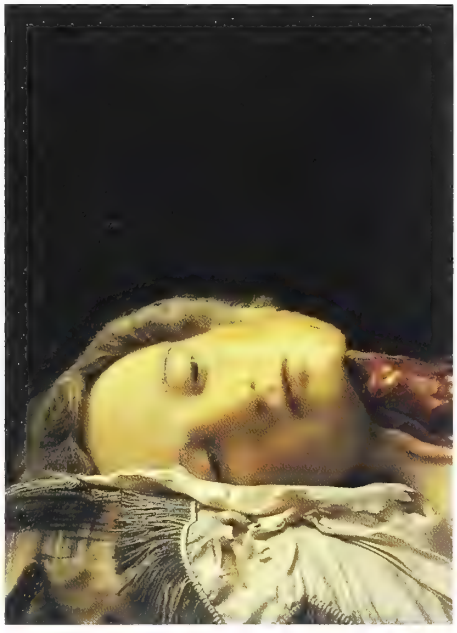
# THE RESURRECTION MEN

## Scenes from the cadaver trade

*By Annie Cheney*

*You are a little soul carrying around a corpse.*
—Epictetus

Last spring, I went to Miami to attend a medical seminar at the Trump International Sonesta Beach Resort, a babel of antiseptic luxury rooms towering over an otherwise decrepit strip of shuttered motels. The Sonesta offers private balconies with built-in Jacuzzis, a full-service spa, and a $6 million swimming pool "complex," as well as an enormous, ocean-facing conference center, which is booked with corporate retreats, annual sales meetings, and wedding receptions. My event, organized by a company called Innovations in Medical Education and Training, had taken over the conference center's Ocean Room, named for the view afforded by its vast picture windows. For this particular seminar, however, the gold taffeta curtains had been drawn and the room accommodated not the board of directors or the families of the bride and groom but rather six stainless-steel gurneys on which rested the legless, armless, headless remains of six dead men.



Gathered in groups of two or three around each of the torsos were the customers, thirteen urologists from Canada and the United States who had covered their heads in blue paper shower caps and pulled surgical gowns over their golf shirts and Dockers. They were here to practice hand-assisted laparoscopic nephrectomy, a minimally invasive procedure for removing a kidney through a very small incision in the abdomen. Laparoscopy demands great skill in operating a fairly specialized set of medical instruments. If the surgeon makes an error—misjudging the distance between his scalpel and the patient's kidney, for example—he runs the risk of seriously injuring the organ. It is easy to make mistakes when you are inexperienced, and so the doctors had paid up to $2,395 each to Innovations in Medical Education and Training to provide them instructors, state-of-the-art equipment, fresh cadavers, and a place to practice.

Dr. Dindigalla Ramana of Lapeer, Michigan, adjusted his gloves and peered eagerly through his wire-rim glasses at the anonymous flesh. It was wrapped tightly, meticulously, in black plastic and secured to the gurney with gray packing tape. The plastic had been peeled back

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Photographs of eighteenth century anatomical wax models from La Specola Museum in Florence, Italy © Saulo Bambi/Laboratorio Fotografico Museo "La Specola"

reveal the corpse's belly, which, due to the [illegible] of gravity, was now a cavernous depression of chocolate-gray flesh. Next to the torso [illegible] which Ramana selected a scalpel. He carved a line through the glistening skin near the navel all the way into the abdominal cavity. Using a smooth plastic ring called a Lap Disc, he stretched the incision into a bracelet-sized opening, through which he inserted a hose that was in turn connected to an air pump. Then he inflated the man's stomach like a balloon. As the torso rose, the skin peeled in places, revealing pale flesh underneath and emitting the faintly sweet smell of decaying bowel.

Beneath this canopy of flesh Ramana could now go about his work. He had already successfully performed this surgery twice on live patients. Each time, though, he was dismayed to find that his hands started shaking as he got close to the big blood vessels. A trip to the Trump resort, with its promise of Florida sunshine, luxurious accommodations, and fresh torsos, seemed like a perfect way to build his confidence. "It's convenient," he'd said earlier. "There are rooms here, you can eat dinner here and bring the wife or the girlfriend."

Ramana's partner for this particular exercise was Dr. Rick Phelps. Unlike Ramana, who brightened at the sight of a fresh torso, Phelps appeared sickened and pale. Before the lab, after eating a lunch of cold cuts, he had excused himself to take a walk outside. I watched him as he paced around the balcony. "I still haven't gotten over the cadavers from medical school," he said.

Phelps nonetheless managed to do his part in the surgery, which was to insert a long, telescopelike camera into the Lap Disc. Presently, the corpse's interior was revealed on a video monitor above us. It was a glossy landscape, globules of yellow fat clinging to marbled red tissue. While Phelps held the camera, Ramana made two smaller incisions above the navel into which he inserted two nickel-sized trocars. Like the Lap Disc, trocars allow surgeons to manipulate instruments without harming the surrounding flesh. Ramana removed the camera from the Lap Disc and inserted it into one of the trocars. Then he inserted a Harmonic Scalpel into the other. The Harmonic Scalpel uses ultrasound technology to both cut and coagulate tissue. One of its advantages, according to its manufacturer, is that it creates "minimal smoke."

The scalpel and camera in place, Ramana rubbed his right hand with lubricant. Then, like a tentative magician, he reached through the Lap Disc into the dark, wet mass of the dead man's torso. Later I asked him what it felt like inside a corpse. He said it was very cold.

As the doctors delved into their patients, New Jersey businessman Augie Perna, forty-two, stood watching from the corner, sucking his teeth. Perna is noticeably short, with delicate, almost pretty features and thick, dark brown hair. He was dressed in his usual business attire: green surgical scrubs, pale blue Puma sneakers, and, hanging from a chain around his neck, the golden head of Jesus, crowned with thorns. Perna is the founder of Innovations in Medical Education and Training (IMET)—"I'm the head cheese," he says by way of introduction.

LIKE A TENTATIVE MAGICIAN, THE DOCTOR REACHED THROUGH THE LAP DISC INTO THE DARK, WET MASS OF THE DEAD MAN'S TORSO. LATER I ASKED HIM WHAT IT FELT LIKE INSIDE A CORPSE. HE SAID IT WAS VERY COLD

Although we had never met in person, I had been obsessed with Augie Perna for many months and had even dreamed about him. In my dream, Perna and I sat facing each other at a conference table drinking coffee. We chatted amiably for a while, and then I took out my notebook and pen. "Okay, Perna," I said. "Let's hear it. Where are you getting the torsos?" And then the dream ended.

My obsession began when, working on another story, I interviewed an anatomist who suggested that I write something about surgical-training seminars. He said the courses were often held in hotels—a practice that, amazingly, does not break any Florida laws—and that they featured human body parts, obtained through a little-known and largely unregulated network of independent operators. Human body parts are an industry, he said. Here's a name. Augie Perna. He's from New Jersey.

So I looked into it. I learned from the National Funeral Directors Association that 73 percent of American corpses were buried last year and the rest were cremated. I also learned, to my great amazement, that no one keeps track of what happened to the corpses before they reached those final destinations.

Although the FDA does regulate tissue banks that procure and process cadaveric material for transplantation into living people, the federal government does not otherwise regulate the trade in cadavers, nor does any private agency, which means that no one knows exactly how many bodies were repurposed along the way. I asked Dr. Todd Olson, who is the chairman of the Anatomical Committee of the Associated Medical Schools of New York, how many cadavers were used to introduce young doctors to the miracles of human anatomy every year. He said he would guess about 10,000.

But that doesn't take into account the other uses. There are the postgraduate courses like the one in Miami, of course, but there are also more commercial seminars, held by companies like U.S. Surgical, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Johnson & Johnson—which is also a Perna client—to demonstrate the latest medical gadgetry. Fresh corpses also serve as the raw material for a variety of surgical and cosmetic products. LifeCell of Branchburg, New Jersey, for example, uses cadaver skin to produce AlloDerm—motto: "Real Human Tissue, Real Easy"—which doctors use to patch the bodies of burn victims. That same flesh can be freeze-dried, stored as long as two years, and then, after being rehydrated, injected into lips, sagging facial lines, and penises. At Regeneration Technologies in Florida, just two and a half hours north of Disney World, workers grind the long bones of corpses into dust, which is then made into paste, called Regenafil, and sold to periodontists, who use it for periodontal surgery. At the same factory, dead bones are fashioned into screws to fasten living bones back together. And at the American Red Cross center in Costa Mesa, California, hearts are broken into pulmonic valves, aortic valves, or anything else that might be a viable product, and then suspended over liquid nitrogen until someone, somewhere, needs a piece.



Business is booming. But the continued success of that business relies upon maintaining a regular supply of flesh and bones. Thus arise entrepreneurs like Augie Perna, who in the great American tradition saw a need and filled it. Perna founded his first company, Limbs & Things—the name was later changed to Surgical Body Forms—in 1995. Three years later he started IMET and, a year after that, a sister company, Mobile Medical Training Unit. In addition to providing torsos to medical-training courses like the ones organized by his own company, Perna also supplies torsos to other companies for use in medical-equipment demonstrations. Perna is philosophical about the gruesome nature of the business. "That torso that you're living in right now is just flesh and bones," he said. "To me, it's a product."

That morning, while the doctors were attending a lecture next door, Augie Perna stood at the window of the Ocean Room looking out over the swimming pool, where children were playing and women were tanning, to the ocean beyond, and then he closed the drapes. In the dimness, he and two other men set to work unpacking six ice-filled Igloo coolers that had been stacked in the corner. From each one, they lifted a plastic-wrapped torso. They laid it on a gurney, and then, like a confident tailor arranging fabric for a suit, Perna turned back the plastic and taped the torso in place.

Perna stood for a moment, his hands on his hips, admiring the torso at station one, which was so tiny it easily could have been mistaken for that of a child. "See here?" he said, gesturing matter-of-factly with his petite hands to two curly masses of veins and muscle. "This is where the arms would be. And the legs, they would be there. But we don't need the legs for this type of thing. That would be wasteful," he said. "Even the head, it could go for dental, brain, facial reconstruction—people who get in accidents."

Corpses enter the supply chain, for the most part, as donations. Families who donate their loved ones, however, often have little more than a vague notion about how the bodies will be used. They are almost never informed that the cadaver may be sold off to middlemen or parceled out to surgical-equipment companies. Certainly, none of them

The sales are a matter of some complexity. Like stolen cars and personal computers, cadavers are worth more in pieces than they are intact. A full body [illegible] from $1,200 to $4,000, depending on the supplier. Heads go for $550. Brains, $500. Shoulders, $431. Spines, $1,500. Knees, $500. Tibias, $400. Femurs, $467.30. Whole legs, $815. Feet, $350. Forearms, $350. Five grams of skin, $803.57. Vaginas (with clitoris), $350. Breasts, $375. Fingernails, $15. Perna specializes in torsos ($1,500). Although the law prohibits anyone from profiting from the sale of human tissue, it does allow those who are so inclined to recover their costs. By inflating the amount they spend on labor, transportation, and storage of the bodies, tissue banks and brokers can easily hide their profits.



Perna buys his torsos precut and has them shipped to his warehouse in Allentown, Pennsylvania. His suppliers freeze the corpses before sending them. He told me he has fifty or sixty of them on hand at any given time and that it takes about four days to defrost one. The thaw varies with the size of the person, which Perna said varies considerably. "Look at that one over there." He pointed to a beach ball of a torso in the corner. "Look at how much larger that one is!"

In an unregulated endeavor like body trading, there are going to be a lot of middlemen. Brokers buy from brokers, who are supplied by funeral directors, who work for medical schools, who procure from hospitals, who work with nursing homes, and on and on. I heard about one guy who got into the business because a medical school friend noticed he happened to have an especially large freezer. In fact, universities, with their donor programs, make up a very small percentage of the suppliers in the body trade, because schools often preserve their corpses with strong chemicals. The preservation process ensures that they will last medical students a full semester, but it also renders the corpses less attractive to postgraduate surgical courses and surgical companies which require more lifelike tissue.

The majority of suppliers are independent companies, known commonly as "tissue banks." In most states, virtually anyone can set up such a company as long as he is not harvesting body parts for transplant or processing the parts into products. The federal government does not regulate non-transplant tissue banks. The New York State health department, unlike its forty-nine counterparts, does license them, but even it does not routinely inspect them.

To open a non-transplant tissue bank, all you need is a basic business license, a warehouse with a freezer, a few serrated handsaws (the kind you see at the butchers in ShopRite, Perna told me), a large chef's knife, and someone on staff who knows how to cut up a corpse. "You put an ad in the paper and you say you're looking for an anatomist who's able to disarticulate bodies. Dime a dozen. It's not a big thing," he said.

Many tissue banks market their services heavily, sending representatives to hospitals, funeral homes, nursing homes, morgues, and hospices to entice the families of corpses and corpses-in-waiting to donate. In what the former owner of one crematorium described to me as "the dangle of the dollar," they sometimes offer families a free cremation and reward funeral homes with a commission for each referral.

Once the deal is done and the corpse is in, Perna said, a good technician can strip a human body in a little less than an hour and sell the parts to university researchers and surgical-equipment companies for close to $10,000. Tissue banks also sell to brokers, who, like Perna, offer a kind of deluxe corpse service to many of the same clients; they take care of transporting the parts, setting them up, keeping them fresh, and hauling them away.

Corpse maintenance requires a certain amount of skill. "Once we defrost them, the liquid comes out." Perna said. "We also give them what you call a bowel prep."

I asked him how one goes about prepping a bowel.

"With a device that we designed. We go up he rectum."

Here I must have flinched, because Perna ouched my arm softly, as if to soothe me. "You ee, the moment you die, you have a bowel novement," he said. "We take care of that."

Transportation is another issue. I asked Perna how he got the torsos from Pennsylvania to Florida. Those were driven down, he said, but as often as not he'll simply pack them up like so many Kobe steaks and mail them. "Why reinvent the wheel?" Perna said. "You call a freight company and they deal with it."

Perna has an account with Airways Freight Corporation, and I called them to see how they felt about shipping body parts. "We do consider ourselves to be a leader in the movement of anatomical specimens," Airways' director of marketing, Mike Nimmo, told me. He also said that Airways brokers about eighty body-part shipments every month, via contracts with commercial airlines, FedEx, and UPS. He was hesitant to provide details, however. "I don't think the public realizes that these products are being shipped through the general system," he said. Indeed, shipping professionals themselves are surprised to find body parts in the mail. In November, FedEx employees in Maplewood, Missouri, noticed that an unmarked package was leaking blood. When they opened it and two others bound for the same destination, they found a leg and two arms. The limbs were being sent to a local broker who would in turn deliver them to a conference to be held in New Orleans by the Arthroscopy Association of North America. FedEx insisted that it does not ship human remains, but tissue banks regularly use their services. The shipper, Philip J. Guyett Jr. of Donor Referral Services in Las Vegas, was entirely unrepentant. As he later explained to a local reporter, "Boxes break."

In the Ocean Room, one of the doctors was himself struggling with a leaking corpse. "Excuse me a moment," Perna said politely, and hurried over to help. As I stood there watching, a big-bellied guy with a suntan and round metal-rim glasses came over and introduced himself as Mike Charloff, IMET's "Florida person." Charloff was jolly and extraordinarily friendly. "I help them out when they're lacking people," he explained in a smoker's rumble. We were joined by Dave Myers, a cherubic blond with a goatee, wearing surgical scrubs like Perna's. "Having fun today?" he asked, with apparent sincerity.

Myers is one of Perna's full-time employees. He works out of the warehouse in Pennsylvania but spends most of his time on the road traveling to different courses.

"Dave drove down and then stayed at my house for one night," Charloff said. They left the torsos in the car. "I have neighbors across the street that are from Ghana, and if she knew about it she would pack up and leave. She would be like, 'I got to go. I got to go.'" Charloff waved his hands in the air, an approximation of Ghanaian panic.

In any business, the quality of the product is important, but it is even more so in the body business, since corpses are in a continual and unavoidable state of decay. Keeping them fresh is a full-time job for people like Myers and Charloff, who told me that on long drives they stop regularly at 7-Eleven for ice.

Augie Perna got his start in the body trade in the mid-1990s, when a veterinarian friend gave him a job at his company, Worldwide Mobile Vet. The company, Perna said, purchased live pigs from farms in southern California and elsewhere and trucked them to medical-training seminars at hotels, universities, and hospitals around the country. For decades, live pigs were the specimen of choice for surgical education. Their anatomy is amazingly close to that of a human being, and, like a human patient under anesthesia, pigs bleed—a marketable piece of verisimilitude. During the 1990s, however, as surgical courses began to focus increasingly on minimally invasive techniques, anatomical fidelity became more important than the propensity to bleed. "I saw an opportunity," Perna said. "This was something that I thought would always be around, because all of the new procedures that are coming out on the market are minimally invasive." Cadavers were both more profitable—$1,500 torsos versus $250 pigs—and, being inanimate, easier to handle. "Businesswise," Perna said, "the returns are there."

Perna, of course, is not the first person to have seen a future in corpses. In 1828, for ex-

IN NOVEMBER, FEDEX EMPLOYEES IN MISSOURI NOTICED THAT AN UNMARKED PACKAGE WAS LEAKING BLOOD. WHEN THEY OPENED IT AND TWO OTHERS BOUND FOR THE SAME DESTINATION, THEY FOUND A LEG AND TWO ARMS

and criminals for game for medical dissection,

Although the earning opportunities are substantial, the cadaver business is a small world of interconnected players. For example, at one time Scalia procured bodies from the University of Michigan's donor program, where, according to its director, he met a man named Arthur Rathburn. Rathburn, who is also a funeral director, was employed as the coordinator of do-

A DEAD BODY SOLD FOR $10 IN NEW YORK CITY. FOR THAT SUM,

LABORERS WOULD DIG UP PEOPLE WHEN NOBODY WAS LOOKING

the resurrection men temporarily vanished. Eventually, schools began accepting body donations directly from the general public.

The current trade grew in part out of the funeral business. Funeral directors have for decades made a few dollars on the side by transporting bodies to and from medical schools. Medical schools, which have a surplus of donated bodies, often share them with other, corpseless schools. This exchange is sometimes accomplished with the help of a funeral director, who transports the cadavers and later cremates the remains. The funeral directors are supposed to act merely as taxi services for the corpses, getting paid for pick-up and delivery. But as it became apparent that there was a growing market for bodies and parts, some of the more enterprising funeral directors started their own brokerage companies, arranging exchanges on their own and taking a cut of the profits.

One such funeral director is John Vincent Scalia, who owns the John Vincent Scalia Home for Funerals at 28 Eltingville Boulevard on Staten Island. He also owns something called National Anatomical Service, which happens to be at the same location. Scalia, I was told by other funeral directors, holds a highly profitable monopoly on surplus university cadavers. In addition to brokering body deals between schools, Scalia sells bodies to doctors; to a crematory in Chicago, which, in turn, supplies an orthopedic learning institute; and to the U.S. Army. Last year, for example, he paid a little less than $7,000 for seven bodies from Tulane University and sold them to the Army for close to $30,000. The Army in turn blew up the bodies in land-mine experiments. Tulane is just one of many medical schools, including Louisiana State, Washington University in St. Louis, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Kansas, that have worked or work with Scalia.

nations in the university's anatomy department. He was fired in 1990. Police reports later accused him of breaking in to the anatomy lab at night and stealing a pair of legs to use in his "business on the side," a now successful company called International Biological, which, as it happens, has supplied Augie Perna with torsos.

Over the years, Perna has had a remarkable string of bad luck when it comes to his suppliers. There have been some "situations," as he puts it, which is perhaps not surprising in a business in which the supply is based entirely upon the intentions of people who are no longer alive. Perna's troubles began in 2000, when he discovered an incredibly fertile new source of body parts in southern California, at the offices of Pacific Cremation Care. The owner of the crematory, Michael Francis Brown—a muscular sandy blond in his early forties—was heavily in debt when he decided, after meeting Perna, to start his own tissue bank. He printed up consent forms and encouraged families who came in asking about cremation to donate their loved ones' bodies to science. In one year, Brown took in more than $400,000 selling various body parts out of his crematory to Perna's companies and to surgical-equipment companies and universities all over the country. The only trouble was, he was helping himself to the parts of any corpse that came through the door. "If you're cremated no one is ever going to know if you're missing your shoulders or your knees or your head," Brown's twenty-three-year-old former assistant and former lover, Jennifer Bittner, later pointed out. In fact, according to the Cremation Association of North America, it is often impossible to determine if the ashes are even those of a particular human. Brown is now serving twenty years in California state prison for embezzlement and

mutilation of human remains. At the mention of his name, Perna sighed thoughtfully. "It's called greediness. Brown's whole thing was greediness."

Around the same time Brown was secretly repurposing his cadavers, Perna was also buying body parts from Allen Tyler, an anatomist's assistant at the University of Texas Medical Branch, in Galveston. Tyler has since been fired and is being sued by the families of donors who the medical school for selling off their loved ones' bodies and pocketing the money.

Perna's current supplier, an Arizona tissue bank called ScienceCare, which provided the torsos at the Trump seminar, is also under scrutiny. Right before I left for the conference, I spoke to a woman named Sue Sedgwick, who said she feared someone may have stolen her mother's body. Two years ago, when her mother died, Sedgwick hired a company called Autopsy Services Incorporated to perform an autopsy. Sedgwick became suspicious when the autopsy report that she received described a woman eighty-five pounds heavier and six inches shorter than her mother. When she went to the hospital where the autopsy supposedly took place to get more information, Sedgwick discovered that her mother's name had been entered in a logbook of tissue donors that was kept in the morgue by Larry Pohorily, an assistant to Autopsy Services' pathologist, who also worked for a Maryland tissue bank and happens to be a lab manager for ScienceCare.



On the second morning of the conference, I found Perna alone with his torsos in the Ocean Room; he was spritzing them with deodorant from a spray bottle. Overnight, they had acquired a renewed vigor and their skin glistened like a live person's might after a short jog. "Can I touch one?" I asked him.

"Sure," he said. Through my plastic glove, the freckled skin of the torso at station two felt cool, and the flesh yielded to my fingers like clay.

Perna watched me closely.

"Does this ever get you down?" I asked him.

"The cadavers?"

"Yeah."

"Not really," he said and sighed, as if I had misunderstood something important. "You don't see a face with it. There's no name associated with it." Cadavers are given numbers to protect the anonymity of the donors. Perna preferred this, of course. An it, not a him.

The doors opened and the surgeons began to make their way over to the tables. Perna had partitioned off half of the room for a group of gynecologists, who had just arrived. There were now nine new stations with female torsos. The women were covered in plastic, except for their vaginas, which had been propped up and exposed like small ruddy mountains. "I don't want to know what's going on over there," one of the urology instructors told me as he put on his gloves. "I mean, a kidney is a kidney, but a vagina is human."

Dr. Kenneth Rutledge, a soft-spoken urologist who had flown in from Atlanta for the course, stood nearby, quadruple-gloving his hand before he reached into the torso.

"We're risking ourselves here," he told me later. "Because we don't know if some of these people may have died from HIV."

He looked at his torso, and the air of detachment disappeared. "Oh, this is gross," he said. "This is worse than a horror movie." He looked up at me. "I'm amazed that you can, as a nonmedical person, be in here and not be vomiting."

It was a good point. I decided to head for the ocean.

In order to get to the beach at the Trump, you have to walk down three flights of whitewashed concrete stairs at the back of the hotel behind the parking garage. Even after Trump's big investment it feels more like the entrance to a municipal swimming pool than to a luxury beachfront. The metal railing on the stairs was hot under my hand. The sun beat down, but I could not get rid of the chills. I was still wearing my wool pantsuit and a long-sleeved shirt, but my teeth were chattering. I thought: Get out on the warm beach with live people. Shake off all

[illegible] corner, there before [illegible]

[illegible] ing, feeling the heat through the rubber soles of my [illegible] the hard [illegible] the limbs [illegible] the beach they wouldn't look [illegible] so much different from the ones upstairs. Fresh torsos are like that. They look and feel real, which is precisely what makes them so valuable.

In 1789 a writer named Francis Hopkinson published these words in a poem entitled "An Oration, Which Might Have Been Delivered to the Students in Anatomy":

> No where's the difference?—to th' impartial eye
> A leg of mutton and a human thigh
> Are just the same—for surely all must own
> Flesh is but flesh, and bone is only bone.

In the poem, Hopkinson defends the practice of anatomical dissection, and he points to something that I was quickly learning: when your livelihood depends on dead bodies, it helps to think of them as something else. In the funeral industry, that something else is very often meat. A leg of mutton and a human thigh.



I have called many people in the funeral business to gain a basic understanding of corpses. I have talked to funeral directors who spoke in melancholy whispers, members of the local Lions Club, brassy salesmen types, guys who carried guns with them when they picked up a body, "just in case." Although their ideologies differed in many areas, particularly sales, when it came to questions of flesh, the analogies they offered were consistent.

How long can a fresh body last in a van? I asked one man.

"You ever put a steak out in the sun?"

How hard is it to cut one up? I asked another.

"It's like carving a turkey. If someone wants a drumstick, you better know where the joints are. If you've got a sharp knife, it ain't hard."

Can you freeze a corpse?

"Just like a chicken."

A New York City cop who has fourteen years of experience coping with dead bodies discovered in the most unlikely locations put it most succinctly. "You don't think about what it was. You think about what it is. And it's a lump of meat."

Upstairs in my room at the Trump later that evening, I ran the water for the bath and set about making coffee. As I spooned creamer into my cup, I detected the sudden and inexplicable smell of decomposing flesh. I sniffed the white powder. Yes, there it was. But it was everywhere. In the coffee beans. Out on the balcony. Was it me? I took off my clothes, avoiding the enormous mirror on the closet door, and slid into the tub. The hard porcelain rubbed painfully against my bones, and I realized, looking down, that in two days I had dropped a considerable amount of weight. My stomach was sunk below my ribs, my arms floated like the branches of a sapling, and I could smell the foul odor of death wafting up from the warm water. I stuck my nose into the bottle of Trump's green sea-grass aromatherapy bath gel until the gooey liquid was touching my nostrils, but it only intensified the nauseatingly sweet smell. (Olfactory hallucinations, I later learned, are very often associated with psychological conditions, and it is common for people suffering them to believe that they themselves are the cause of the odors.)

As I lay in the tub, my fear mounting, I remembered a conversation that I had with Richard Santore, a retired funeral director from Brooklyn with a peg leg, who sought to be known in the 1980s as the "Crazy Eddie of the Funeral Business." Santore was one of the first people in the funeral industry, as far as I can tell, to start his own donor program. In the 1970s he founded the Anatomical Gift Bank of New York, which shared offices with his funeral home, and which was later investigated by the Health Department for not obtaining and filing the proper paperwork for donated bodies. Yet Santore

ontinued to receive willed bodies up until the 980s, when five of his cadavers went missing nd were later discovered by a plasterer in a arehouse in Florence, Kentucky.

When I mentioned the incident to him over ne phone, Santore became agitated and told ne to turn off the tape recorder. Later he suggested that I stop concentrating on the past. Just because Charlie Jones did something terbly wrong five years ago, is it right to rehash nis today in such a way that it makes it appear

"I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND COARSE, BUT THAT'S A NICE LIVING." HE NODDED TOWARD THE TORSOS AND LAUGHED. "AND IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'RE SELLING CARS. BECAUSE WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS YOU'RE BETTERING MANKIND"

s though I do it as a regular practice? That's vrong. That's yellow journalism," he told me rom his new office in Tennessee, where he ublished a now defunct online newsletter enitled "Today in Deathcare." I asked him if he ever got up to New York, whether he'd like to neet me and talk in person.

"Yes," he said. "And maybe I'll strangle you."

As it happens, asphyxiation is one method of murder that yields a pristine anatomical specimen. In nineteenth-century Scotland, where resurrection men abounded, the practice was known as "burking." It was named for William Burke, who, together with his partner, William Hare, went on a killing spree out of greed. The two men murdered sixteen people and later sold the bodies to anatomists for a handsome price. Knowing that any violent method of murder could be detected during the anatomical dissections, the two men lured their victims—many of them old women—into Hare's lodging house, where they got them drunk and then smothered them to death.

After we hung up, Santore called me at two in the morning. His number showed up on my caller ID. When I picked up the phone, there was no answer, but I could hear him breathing heavily on the other end of the line. "Hello? Hello?" I said.

After I got out of the bathtub, a feeling akin to defiance compelled me to call room service and order a rare hamburger. When it arrived, I sat down on the bed and ate the bloody meat in my underwear.

The smell of death in the Ocean Room became nauseatingly strong as the weekend dragged on, and Charloff, the assistant, was angry.

"I told the guy from the hotel at the beginning," he said, "if you keep it cold in here, there will be no smell. If you don't, there's nothing we can do."

The torsos looked—there's no getting around it—like leftover turkeys. The doctors had successfully performed nephrectomies, both hand-assisted and laparoscopic; some had even removed the prostate laparoscopically, an incredibly challenging operation. They had learned how to sew and cut and cauterize tissue, manipulating their instruments through minute incisions.

Perna was delighted by the doctors' progress. He said the next thing he was going to do was expand into gastric-bypass courses. Gastric bypass is the medical term for stomach stapling—"a very upcoming field." Perna said that sixty-five percent of people in this country are overweight. "The biggest growth is children!"

"Augie is really a very bright man," Charloff said later. "He really is. He's a thinker when it comes to business."

"Now the three of us, we want to get the bodies for ourselves," he confided. "You have to do some market research . . . go to hospitals, nursing homes." I asked him to tell me more. "Augie pretty much will have to direct me as far as how to sell the product. How to say the right things to the people and how not to make people think that I'm a bad guy because I don't know the lingo, so to speak. That's where Augie comes in."

"I feel like I'm witnessing something revolutionary," I said.

"You are! You know why?" He looked at me and grinned. Then he explained to me that he had called officials in Pennsylvania and Florida to discuss the legalities of the tissue-banking business and they had no idea what he was talking about. "So that means I've got to be one of the first hundred or less that's doing something like this, and you know, I don't mean to sound coarse, but that's a nice living." He nodded toward the torsos and laughed. "And it's not like you're selling cars, because what you're doing is you're bettering mankind."

I asked him about the shaky legality of profiting from the sale of human remains. He said it was not a problem. "We're not selling these. They're being leased." He laughed. In fact, Perna has the remains cremated when he is done with them. Then he either returns the ashes to the tissue

In nineteenth-century England, a resurrection [illegible] h for funeral processions around [illegible] dig up whoever had died

Friday November 29th, 1811
At night went out and got 3 . . .

Saturday November 30th
At night went out and got 3 [illegible] sold to Mr Cline St. Thomas's Hospital.

Naples and his comrades were heavy drinkers, no doubt because of the gruesome nature of their jobs.

Monday February 24th, 1812
Bill Jack Tom and Ben with Nat Ure Getting drunk oblige to Come Home in a Coach which prevented us going out . . .

Wednesday, February 26th, 1812
. . . Could not go out Jack and Tom got drunk. Ben taken very ill.

Thursday, February 27th, 1812
. . . Sold the extremities . . . Tom & Bill got drunk

"All of us are the same," Charloff had told me, referring to his professional associates. "As soon as they leave"—he gestured toward the doctors—"we'll go grab a few beers."

"Augie doesn't seem like a beer drinker to me," I offered.

Charloff was thoughtful. "Augie's more of a merlot or a manhattan drinker," he said. "Yeah, well, you know—hey listen, he's earned it! God bless him."

After I got home from the conference, I met up with Perna at a diner near his house in New Jersey. He was wearing a tight black T-shirt, jeans, and cowboy boots. He looked smaller without his surgical scrubs. His cell phone rang throughout our conversation. The first time it was his mother. "Hi, Ma," he said, exasperated. "Yes, Ma." Speaking in southern Italian dialect, he promised her that he would call the architect. "I take care of my parents too," he whispered, covering up the mouthpiece—and then he hung up the phone. A few minutes later, his second wife, April Malloy Perna, called from North Carolina, where she moved after filing for divorce. Malloy runs a baby-sitting company called Emergency Nanny Care Services, which Perna funded. "She's the crazy one," he said. "She's doing a story on, not me," Perna said. "Child care in America is the worst in the country." From Perna's tone on the phone, it appeared that the two were still very much together. "The business is booming," he said proudly. Indeed, the company was doing so well that after just six months in business its website announced it was expanding, strikingly, into "care for the elderly."

When I asked Perna about his own plans for the future, he told me he was moving forward with his idea to start a tissue bank of his own. The donor side is the place to be, Perna said. "You know, when I first started this, man, I could've gotten eighty a week. Torsos were being destroyed! They were taking spines out of them. They were using their heads for dentistry and plastic surgery and it was like, *the torso*, who wants it?" Now, tissue banks can't keep up with the demand. "If you want a shoulder, we're talking ninety days at least!" he said giggling. "That's where the money is!" He picked up his fork and began slapping the back of the tines against his palm. "Oh, shoulders! Knees!"

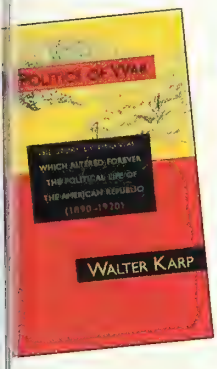
What about the bodies? I asked. How will you find them? "Mostly in nursing homes. Funeral homes. People that can't afford to get buried."

Unfortunately, a dead person is much more difficult to commodify than a live pig. Still, you can approximate a pig farm by choosing the right location. Florida, for example, would be perfect, Perna reasoned, except that it has too many rich people, who tend not to be impressed by any "dollar dangling." *Give me your tired, your poor,* I thought. *The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me.*

As Perna sees it, there are plenty of people who would like to make something of themselves in death, if not in life. He imagines a streamlined future for the cadaver trade, in which straight talk about real needs replaces prudish euphemism. "If I was you," he said, "I would open up a company that is just going to basically buy bodies." The company would pay, he said, something like $20,000 for a cadaver, chop it up, and then sell the pieces for $200,000. Poor families would enjoy a new source of income, the company would make a large profit, and the marketplace would finally be provided precisely the parts it desired. "You wanna buy a heart?" he asked. "Here it is, baby! One through ten! Different sizes! Different blood types! Whatever!"

Perna is a charming man, and his enthusiasm for the cadaver trade is infectious. The more I talked to him, the more I thought maybe we should all be getting into the cadaver business, as brokers or suppliers or both. "Think about it, it would be like farming. You'd be farming people!" he said. At the moment, the supply of dead bodies falls far short of the demand. What could be more American than doing the difficult work of balancing that equation? ■

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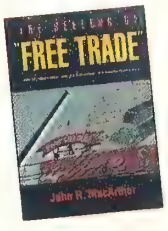
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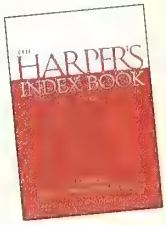
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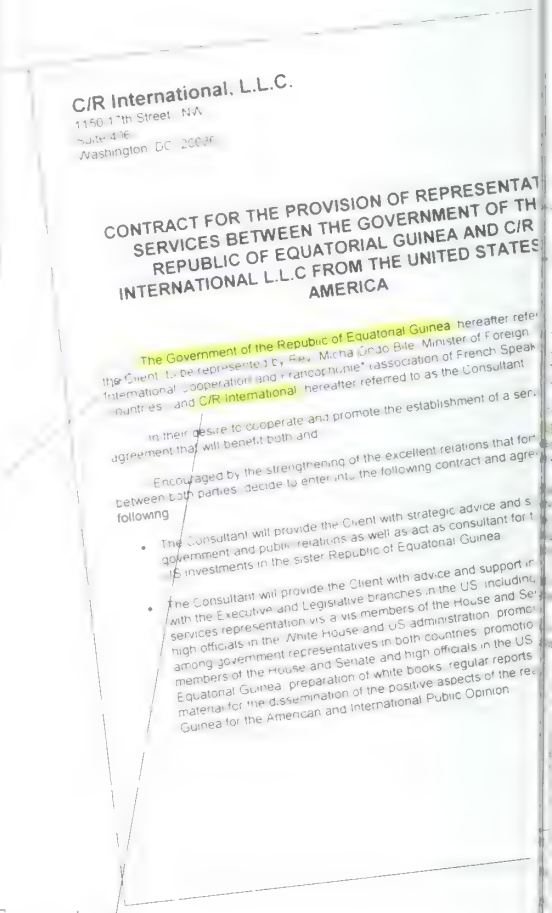
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# SPIN DOCTORS V

## How one Washington lobbyist adm

[illegible] D.C., don't just serve such U.S. in- [illegible] and the richest corporations; they [illegible] from foreign governments. In an extreme, though not uncommon scenario, Americans, many of them former diplomats and public servants, make their fortunes by advancing the interests of dictatorships against those of their own nation. Take Robert Cabelly, managing director of the lobbying and P.R. firm C/R International, who last August signed a contract (the first two pages of which are shown here) with the small African nation of Equatorial Guinea. Cabelly has every reason to expect that he will succeed in preventing any sanctions the U.S. Congress might wish to impose on Equatorial Guinea and in other ways shaping American policy to the liking of this repressive regime.



C/R International, L.L.C.
1150 17th Street, NW
Suite 406
Washington, DC 20036

CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF REPRESENTAT
SERVICES BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF TH
REPUBLIC OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA AND C/R
INTERNATIONAL L.L.C FROM THE UNITED STATES
AMERICA

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, hereafter refe
the Client, to be represented by, Rev. Micha Ondo Bile, Minister of Foreign
International Cooperation and Francophonie, Association of French Speak
countries, and C/R International, hereafter referred to as the Consultant

In their desire to cooperate and promote the establishment of a ser
agreement that will benefit both and

Encouraged by the strengthening of the excellent relations that for
between both parties, decide to enter into the following contract and agre
following

- The Consultant will provide the Client with strategic advice and s
government and public relations as well as act as consultant for t
US investments in the sister Republic of Equatorial Guinea
- The Consultant will provide the Client with advice and support in
with the Executive and Legislative branches in the US, including
services representation vis a vis members of the House and Se
high officials in the White House and US administration, promoti
among government representatives in both countries, promotio
members of the House and Senate and high officials in the US,
Equatorial Guinea, preparation of white books, regular reports
material for the dissemination of the positive aspects of the re
Guinea for the American and International Public Opinion

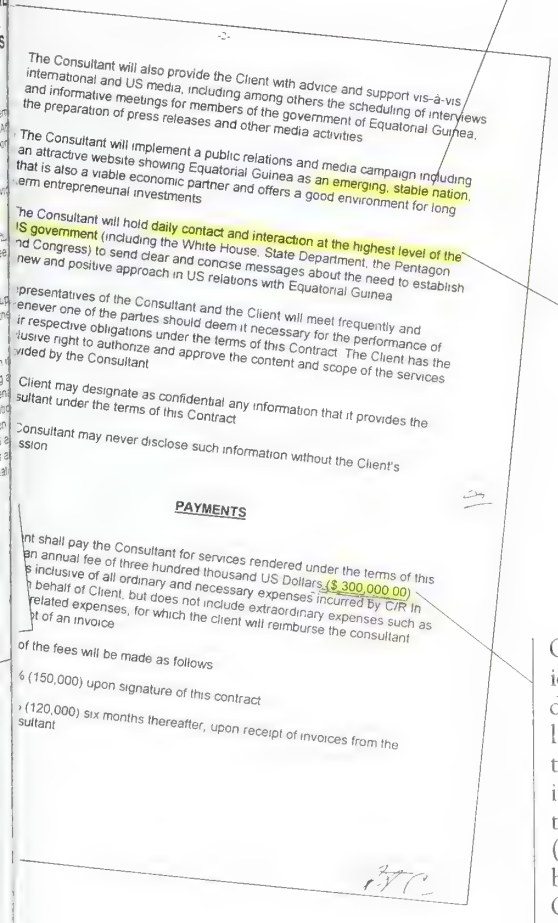
Equatorial Guinea, governed by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, might seem like a public-relations problem. In 2002 more than 150 of the president's political opponents were arrested for allegedly plotting a coup. Blindfolded for long periods, some of the prisoners were hung in positions designed to break their bones, and at least two died. A democracy only in name (the president "won" 97 percent of the vote in 2002), Equatorial Guinea did little to improve its human-rights record in 2003, during which a journalist was detained for reporting rumors of a coup, an outspoken pastor was arrested without charges, and an opposition-party member was moved to solitary confinement, chained to a wall, and denied badly needed medical care. But Washington, as well as ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco, now has an interest in trade with Equatorial Guinea: oil was discovered offshore there in 1995, making it the third-largest petroleum producer in Africa.

Cabelly's firm, C/R International, may have won its contract with Equatorial Guinea because of its service to African nations with even more oil. In 1995, after Sani Abacha, then dictator of Nigeria, executed nine prominent political activists, members of the U.S. House and Senate introduced bills laying the groundwork for an international oil embargo. Africa's top oil producer fought back by hiring nine U.S. lobbying and P.R. firms, including C/R (to which Base Petroleum, owned by Abacha's son, paid an estimated $1 million). The bills died, and only trifling penalties against the regime—limiting sales of military equipment and restricting visas for senior officials—were enacted. From 1996 to 2002, C/R received $6 million from Angola. In 2001 the United States gave Angola $2.8 million in military assistance, a marked increase from $0 in the previous three years and a total of $200,000 between 1962 and 1997. While C/R served Angola, the goverment's troops beat and raped civilians, and killed suspected rebel sympathizers.

# HOUT BORDERS

## ) dictatorships, *by Elisabeth Eaves*

Because of its sudden oil wealth, Equatorial Guinea has the world's fastest-growing economy, but the nation qualifies as "stable" only in that President Obiang has ruled since 1979, when he overthrew and executed his even more despotic uncle. While most of its citizens earn about $1 a day, President Obiang neglects infrastructure and misappropriates oil revenue in favor of lavish personal expenditures. (He recently paid $2.6 million in cash for a mansion near Washington, D.C.) As the United States tries to reduce its dependence on the Middle East, African oil has taken on greater geopolitical significance. Because of work by C/R and others, Washington will likely continue to ignore the fact that Africa's oil producers are ruled by dictatorships that continually violate human rights.



The Consultant will also provide the Client with advice and support vis-à-vis international and US media, including among others the scheduling of interviews and informative meetings for members of the government of Equatorial Guinea, the preparation of press releases and other media activities

The Consultant will implement a public relations and media campaign including an attractive website showing Equatorial Guinea as an emerging, stable nation, that is also a viable economic partner and offers a good environment for long -erm entrepreneunal investments

he Consultant will hold daily contact and interaction at the highest level of the IS government (including the White House, State Department, the Pentagon nd Congress) to send clear and concise messages about the need to establish new and positive approach in US relations with Equatorial Guinea

presentatives of the Consultant and the Client will meet frequently and enever one of the parties should deem it necessary for the performance of ir respective obligations under the terms of this Contract The Client has the lusive right to authorize and approve the content and scope of the services vided by the Consultant

Client may designate as confidential any information that it provides the sultant under the terms of this Contract

Consultant may never disclose such information without the Client's ssion

**PAYMENTS**

nt shall pay the Consultant for services rendered under the terms of this an annual fee of three hundred thousand US Dollars ($ 300,000 00) s inclusive of all ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by C/R In behalf of Client, but does not include extraordinary expenses such as related expenses, for which the client will reimburse the consultant pt of an invoice

of the fees will be made as follows

% (150,000) upon signature of this contract

(120,000) six months thereafter, upon receipt of invoices from the sultant

For Cabelly, daily contact with U.S. officials includes talking to old colleagues from his years at the State Department, where he helped to negotiate the 1994 peace agreement between Angola and its UNITA rebels. Many lobbyists have worked previously in public service: in 1997, Burma hired Jefferson Waterman International, a firm run by former assistant secretary of state for international narcotics Ann Wrobleski, in an unsuccessful attempt to end U.S. trade sanctions. (Since 1997, Burma has been one of the top two producers of opium in the world.) With his connections, Cabelly may urge the Bush Administration to grant Equatorial Guinea preferential trade status and will likely lobby the State Department to issue MPRI, a Virginia-based military contractor, the license it has been seeking to train the Equatoguinean military. His work for the country began on a promising note: in October, two months after the deal between Equatorial Guinea and C/R, the U.S. embassy in Malabo reopened after being shuttered for eight years.

C/R's fee of $300,000 is a small price to pay for favorable U.S. policy. In 2002, payments to the lobbyists and P.R. firms registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act—a total of $408 million—covered a range of projects, from touting Caribbean beaches to urging the removal of sanctions against pariah nations. Oil-industry insiders and excited energy experts have nicknamed Equatorial Guinea "the Kuwait of Africa" for its tiny population (500,000) and its vast oil reserves (1.1 billion barrels). Perhaps Cabelly will be so successful as to further the parallel. In 1990 and 1991, Citizens for a Free Kuwait, funded by the emir's government, paid Hill & Knowlton a record $10.8 million over six months to cre ate a media and lobbying campaign widely credited with convincing the U.S. public that its soldiers should defend the tiny, distant monarchy. As long as the dictatorship in Equatorial Guinea finds lobbyists to take its oil money, it has every reason to expect preferential trade policies, if not, one day, U.S. troops to defend it.

*th Eaves lives in Washington, he is working on a book about s for foreign governments.*

# VOTING DEMOCRACY OFF THE ISLAND

## Reality TV and the Republican Ethos

*By Francine Prose*

Not even Melana can believe it's real. As the "former NFL cheerleader and beauty queen looking to fall in love with the perfect guy" swans a bit dazedly through the Palm Springs mansion in which she will soon undertake the task of selecting Mr. Right from among sixteen eligible bachelors, she coos about the thrill of living a "dream come true."

It's the premiere episode of NBC's *Average Joe*, one of the extremely popular and profitable "reality-based" television shows that, in recent years, have proliferated to claim a significant share of major-network prime time. Featuring ordinary people who have agreed to be filmed in dangerous, challenging, or embarrassing situations in return for the promise of money, romance, or fame, these offerings range from *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?* to *Who Wants to Marry My Dad?*, from long-run hits such as *Survivor* and *The Real World* to the short-lived *Are You Hot?* and *Boy Meets Boy*.

The title *Average Joe* has evidently alerted Melana to the possibility that her bachelor pool may not be stocked with the same species of dazzling hunks, those walking miracles of body sculpting, cosmetic dentistry, and hair-gel expertise who courted "The Bachelorette." Clearly, she's expecting to meet the more routinely, unself-consciously attractive sort of guy one might spot on the street or at the water cooler.

But, as frequently happens, the audience is privy to an essential truth—or, in the argot of reality programming, a "reveal"—concealed from the hapless participants. Now, as the cameras whisk us to the bachelors' quarters, we instantly get the visual joke that is, even by the standards of reality TV, sadistic.

The men about to compete for Melana's affections are not merely Joe Well Below Average but Joe Out of the Question. Several are obese; others have tics, dermatological or dental problems, or are short, bespectacled, balding, stooped. Racial and cultural diversity is provided by a diminutive "university professor" from Zimbabwe with a penchant for intellectual boasting and grave fashion miscalculations.

Although the sight of Melana's suitors is intended to amuse and titillate rather than to touch us, it would (to paraphrase Dickens amid this Dickensian crowd) take a heart of stone not to be moved by the moment when the men take a look at one another and realize that their inclusion in this confraternity of nerds is probably not a mistake.

Meanwhile, night has fallen on th desert, and the lovely Melana, al dressed up and as starry-eyed as a kid o Christmas morning, comes out to mee the guys. A white limousine pulls up. A male model emerges, and Melana's fac brightens, only to darken seconds lat er when he announces that, sadly, h is not one of her bachelors.

The white limo carries the teas away. Presently a bus arrives.

The bus doors open. They send th fat guys out first. And by the time half-dozen sorry specimens are line up, grinning their hearts out, ever Melana gets it. Her shock and disma are genuine. The men cannot help bu notice. "This is *bad*," she whispers, an we can read her lips. "Someone's mess ing with my head."

What lends the scene its specia poignancy is that Melana knows, a do we, that what has befallen her i not some cruel accident of fate. Rathe she has brought misfortune on herself In filling out the questionnaire tha led to her being selected as the hero ine of *Average Joe*, she indicated tha "a good personality" mattered more t her than did appearance. And in do ing so, she violated one of the cardina rules, a basic article of faith, one o the values that this new version of re ality pumps out, hour after hour, nigh after night, into the culture. Ha Melana watched more reality-base TV, she would have learned that sur

*Francine Prose is a contributing editor of* Harper's Magazine. *Her most recent book is* Gluttony *(Oxford University Press).*

face beauty (preferably in concert with a strong manipulative instinct, a cunning ability to play the game, and vast quantities of money) is all that counts. Melana has transgressed. And now, as we sit back and watch, she is about to be punished.

If this—a dash of casual brutality, a soupçon of voyeurism—is your recipe for entertainment, it's a taste you can satisfy, in the privacy of your living room, nearly every evening. In fact, unless you own one of those televisions that allow you to watch two programs at once, you may be forced to make some hard choices.

On a typical night—Thanksgiving Eve, November 26, 2003—you could, at eight, watch a contestant on CBS's *Survivor Pearl Islands* secure himself some sympathy by misleading his fellow tribe members into thinking that his grandmother has just died. But



witnessing the "biggest lie ever told on *Survivor*" would mean missing the episode of NBC's *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* in which a quintet of homosexual fashion and lifestyle advisers convince a balding lawyer to lose his unflattering hairpiece. At nine, you could shop along with ABC's Trista for *Trista & Ryan's Wedding*, an account of the big-ticket ceremony that would solemnize the love affair spawned, as America watched, on *The Bachelorette*. And at ten, on *Extreme Makeover*, the most literally invasive series so far, two lucky souls (chosen from more than 10,000 applicants) have their lives transformed by plastic surgery. On this night a man whose 200-pound weight loss has left him looking like a shar-pei, and a rather pretty grade-school teacher—who believes that she is only a rhinoplasty and a chin implant away from rivaling her beautiful sisters—will go under the knife.

In the event that three hours of watching your fellow humans suffer and squirm and endure surgical procedures has left you feeling uneasy about how you have spent your time, or what you have found amusing, you can be reassured—as are the network executives, it would seem—by the fact that you are not alone. In January 2003 the premiere of Fox Network's *Joe Millionaire*, in which a construction worker courted women tricked into believing that he possessed a vast personal fortune, attracted 18.6 million viewers; 40 million tuned in for its conclusion. *American Idol*, the talent show that asks fans to vote for their favorite contestants by telephone, received 110 million calls in its first season and 15.5 million calls during the final show alone. By contrast, the most popular national news program—NBC's *Nightly News*—averages around 11 million viewers per night.

Like Melana, network accountants were quick to see reality shows as a dream come true. For although production values and costs have risen, reality-based programs are still relatively cheap to produce, mostly because they avoid the expense of hiring actors whose salary demands can rise astronomically if the show becomes a hit. One consequence is that television actors have seen a radical reduction in the number and range of available roles.

Despite the fact that journalists periodically hail the death of reality TV, it has proved remarkably long-lived. MTV's *The Real World*, which sends seven attractive young strangers to spend six months turning their luxury housing into a Petri dish of sexual, racial, and interpersonal tension, has been running since 1992. Now in its eighth season, *Survivor* has airlifted a succession of warring "tribes" from the Amazon to the jungles of Thailand. During the week of November 17–23, 2003, the only shows more popular than *Survivor Pearl Islands* (which drew 19.9 million viewers) were *CSI*, *ER*, and *Friends*.

On aesthetic grounds alone, it's arguable that reality-based shows are no better or worse than *CSI*, *ER*, and *Friends*. But the most obvious difference is the most crucial one. Fans of *Friends* understand that they are watching a sitcom, cast with celebrity actors. Watching *Survivor* and *The Real World*, they believe that they are observing *real* men and women.

Viewers do, of course, realize that some of what they're seeing has been instigated or exacerbated by the show's producers. Yet the fact is that viewers *are* watching people who, regardless of their career ambitions or masochistic exhibitionism, are amateurs who may have been chosen *for* their fragility and instability. Many of the "Average Joes" could never get hired as character actors. And observing their response to stress and humiliation generates a gladiatorial, bread-and-circus atmosphere that simply does not exist when we see movie stars in scrubs sail a gurney down the halls of *ER*.

Reality-based TV, then, is not a scripted fiction but an improvisation, an apparently instructive improvisation that doles out consistent and frequently reinforced lessons about human nature and, yes, reality. These programs also generate a jittery, adrenalized buzz that produces a paradoxically tranquilized numbness in

Illustration by Thomas Fuchs

What might future anthropologists (or, for that matter, contemporary TV-addicted children and adults) conclude about our world if these programs constituted their primary source of information? The most obvious lesson to be drawn from reality TV, the single philosophical pole around which everything else revolves, is that the laws of natural selection are even more brutal, inflexible, and *sensible* than one might suppose from reading *Origin of Species*. Reality is a Darwinian battlefield on which only the fittest survive, and it's not merely logical but admirable to marshal all our skills and resources to succeed in a struggle that only one person can win.

Compelling its testy, frequently neurotic castaways to operate as if they were several rungs down the evolutionary ladder, grubbing roots and berries and forced to earn such basic necessities as blankets by performing acrobatic stunts, *Survivor* is the prototype. The show urges its participants to labor for their tribe but always, ultimately, for themselves. Because at the end of the day—in this case, the final episode—only one person will walk away with a million dollars. And in case we lose sight of first principles, the show's motto, which appears in its logo, is "Outwit. Outplay. Outlast."

*Survivor* is the younger American cousin of the 1997 Swedish *Expedition Robinson*, a title judged too literary for the U.S. market. It's probably just as well that the series wasn't called *Expedition Robinson*. *Robinson Crusoe* and *Swiss Family Robinson* extol the virtues and advantages of fellowship and cooperation, whereas on *Survivor* such considerations are useful only to a point. *Survivor* could be Defoe's masterpiece rewritten by Ayn Rand. And for all its Darwinian trappings, the series offers a skewed view of the *purpose* of the struggle for dominance. In people, the scientific consensus holds, the last thing on these people's minds.

[illegible] that goal aren't determined by physical prowess or brilliant display of plumage. Rather, contestants are eliminated by a democratic process; every few days, tribe members vote on which of their fellows will be forced to leave the island. As we watch, the loser trudges across a rope bridge or rock ledge and off to a dismal future without a million dollars.

Observant readers may already have noted that the guiding principles to which I've alluded—flinty individualism, the vision of a zero-sum society in which no one can win unless someone else loses, the conviction that altruism and compassion are signs of folly and weakness, the exaltation of solitary striving above the illusory benefits of cooperative mutual aid, the belief that certain circumstances justify secrecy and deception, the invocation of a reviled common enemy to solidify group loyalty—are the exact same themes that underlie the rhetoric we have been hearing and continue to hear from the Republican Congress and our current administration.

Of course, no sensible person would imagine that Donald Rumsfeld is sitting down with the producers of reality-based TV to discuss the possibility that watching the contestants sweat and strain to bring civilization to the jungle will help us accept the sacrifices we have been and are still being asked to make in Iraq. On the other hand, there is the unsettling precedent set by *Profiles from the Front Line*, a series that aired around the time of the war in Iraq and was produced for ABC Entertainment by Jerry Bruckheimer, whose credits include *Black Hawk Down*.

According to an advance release from the network,

> the Pentagon and the Department of Defense [illegible] full support and cooperation to this unique production. . . . [illegible] possible war [illegible] continues to wage [illegible] ABC will [illegible] actual battlefields [illegible] episode se[illegible] actual footage of the elite U.S. Special Operations forces apprehending possible terrorists, as well as compelling, personal stories of the U.S. military men and women who bear the burden and risks of this fighting.

Indeed, ABC News complained that—in order to film the soldiers arresting a "big-time" Taliban leader, disarming rockets, providing medical care to Afghan civilians, capturing fuel-truck hijackers, and accepting the love and gratitude of the Afghan people—the show's producers were being granted a level of access to the troops that Pentagon officials denied the network's actual reporters.

But even when the collaboration between the military, the government, and the entertainment industry is not nearly so overt, these shows continue to transmit a perpetual, low-frequency hum of agitprop. The ethics (if one can call them that) and the ideals that permeate these programs at once reflect and reinforce the basest, most mindless and ruthless aspects of the current political zeitgeist. If the interests of the corporate culture that controls our television stations are at heart the same as those that fund and support lobbyists and politicians, it stands to reason that—when network executives do meet to determine what is appropriate, entertaining, profitable, what people want and need to see—they are unlikely to flinch at portraying stylized versions of the same behavior we read about in the press, or can observe on the Senate floor.

Among the notions of reality that the designers of these shows appear to hold in common with the participants in the corporate strategy session—or, one presumes, the Pentagon or Cabinet meeting—is the vision of the world as a vast human-behavior laboratory. Its population of lab rats can be coolly observed by the research scientists (the market analyst, the politician, the TV viewer), who can then draw profitable lessons from their subjects' responses. Let's see how the castaways behave when they are ordered to abandon their humble camp and exiled to a new locale. Let's watch how the homely bachelors compete for the hand of the beauty, how quickly the public embraces the next revolution in junk food, and how the cit

zens of the Middle East deal with their altered circumstances when we change their regimes and encourage them to adopt Western values. Meanwhile, this objective, experimental mode dispels any qualms we might feel about the fact that the research subjects are humans who may have their own ideas and opinions about how they want to live.

Presumably, many of these shows' creators would be unnerved to hear that the harmless amusements they are concocting actually reflect, reinforce, and codify a specific political agenda. But it might come as less of a surprise to, say, Mark Burnett, the executive producer of *Survivor*.

At seventeen, the London-born Burnett joined the British army and became a paratrooper, a decorated member of the elite Parachute Regiment, with which he saw combat in the Falkland Islands and in Northern Ireland. In 1982 he set out for Central America, then in the throes of widespread guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency terrorism. En route to work there as a military adviser with the British Special Air Service, he decided instead to get off the plane in Los Angeles and seek his fortune in Hollywood.

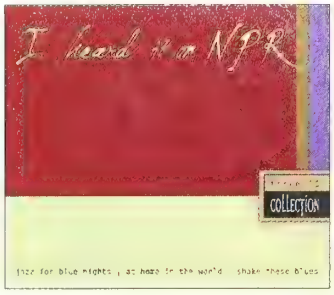
After brief stints as a nanny and a T-shirt salesman, his military background and media ambitions inspired him to enter the Raid Gauloises, an annual French race that sent teams on rugged courses through the Oman desert and the jungles of Borneo. In 1995, Burnett started his own version of the French competition, the Eco-Challenge, which (over the objections of environmentalists) took place in Utah and was filmed for the Discovery Channel. When the 1998 Eco-Challenge, staged in Morocco, received an Emmy Award, Burnett was in an ideal position to market the American rights to *Survivor*, which he had presciently acquired.

Reading Mark Burnett's résumé cannot help but make *Survivor* seem even more like a weekly dispatch from the Central American terrorist training camp to which he may have been headed when he was lured off course by the siren song of Hollywood. And our unease about the cozy relationship between the broadcasting industry and its advertisers is hardly soothed when we learn that Burnett has given "motivational, leadership and team-building speeches" for such clients as IBM, Citibank, Sony, USA Networks, Discovery Channel, and Ad-Week Asia. Knowing all this can only make us doubly aware, and wary, of the nuggets of motivational and guerrilla training we are receiving along with the seemingly innocent pleasure of picking sides and favorites, deciding which bachelor or bachelorette we'd choose.

The merciless individualism and bloodthirsty competition turn out to represent the noblest, most heroic aspect of this new reality. The darker, more cynical message—the lesson beneath the lesson, so to speak—is that every human being can and will do *anything* for money. Like those consciousness-altering substances that hurtled the Hashishins and certain indigenous tribes into battle, the smell of $50,000 intoxicates the contestants on *Fear Factor* enough to achieve a protracted out-of-body experience. How else to explain their ability to so suppress both instinct and free will that they don't gag over goblets of liquefied night-crawler guts, don't recoil from a helmet of rats, don't rebel when they are instructed to crawl into a pitch-black cave tunnel and retrieve as many ripe skunk carcasses as possible in a limited time?

Pragmatism is the main concern, whereas morality is a luxury or, worse, an impediment, an albatross. And given the limitlessness of what our fellow humans will do for cash, considering the folly of acting according to ethical scruples, it's only logical that everyone lies all the time. In some shows—*Joe Millionaire* had twenty-five women convinced that its protagonist was rich, and the gay hero of *Boy Meets Boy* had not been informed that several of his suitors were actually straight—the lying is institutionalized; elsewhere deception is a more spontaneous, situational response. When that *Survivor* contestant cons the privilege of going off alone with a friend from home because the friend allegedly brings news of the contestant's supposedly dead


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scandal—it truly does take a village. It doesn't take the guy from *Survivor* to make it make sense to be superstitious.

The notion that everyone has a part, mendacious and otherwise, in a parallel meta-reality outside the programs themselves—in the media coverage of the scandals that erupt when contestants are exposed for not being what they appear. (For why should that surprise us. We've seen the lies told on the dating shows. The assumption that the audience was less astonished than Darva Conger, the lucky winner of *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire?*, to learn that the finances of her rich new husband were shakier than he'd let on. Nor are we amazed to hear that an eligible bachelor is a former underwear model, or that the "university professor" on *Average Joe* has his own website advertising his skill as an actor. And why was that talented contestant kicked off *American Idol* just because of her involvement in Internet porn? The problem, apparently, is not the act of lying but rather the need to maintain strict control over who is permitted to lie, and under what circumstances.

The segment of TV broadcasting that is not merely "reality-based" but claims to report "reality"—the evening news and so-called news magazines such as *20/20* and *Dateline NBC*—are learning, along with the rest of us, the lessons of *Fear Factor* and *Survivor*. Having observed the public's comfort with the notion of people's willingness to do anything for money, these quasi-journalistic shows no longer hesitate to air programs such as the one, last fall, in which kidnap victim Elizabeth Smart and her family relived her horrific ordeal and, incidentally, plugged her parents' new book. Having noted how unquestioningly all the world loves a winner, the producers of the nightly news can cease worrying about their instinct to shape their coverage in support of whichever party or idea is currently leading in the polls.

If the truth is a millstone around one's neck, civility is likewise a hobble guaranteed to slow us down. And why should we be polite when rudeness is so amusing, and when we all secretly know that the spectacle of exclusion and humiliation is the highest [illegible] fortunate parent trying to instruct a [illegible] child in the importance of kindness and empathy when that child [illegible] has observed that producer Simon [illegible] spares each time he "levels" [illegible] is chopped. But even om—one of the poor souls guilty of singing badly while auditioning for the show's judges.

It is almost a relief to retreat to the candlelit, soft-focus world of the mating reality shows. That is, until we realize that these too are death matches of a sort, that the competing bachelors and bachelorettes will blithely mislead and betray one another in pursuit of the man or woman of their dreams. Still, part of what sets these shows apart from the rest is that, unlike the castaways and delusional music hopefuls, the suitors and love objects are meant to be not only "real" but "nice" people. One way we know this is that they continually espouse a set of fantasies, hopes, and ideals that (although the finalists are often shown making out in the Jacuzzi and shutting the bedroom door on the film crew at the culmination of decisive "private dates") would gladden the hearts of right-wing Christian proponents of old-fashioned Family Values.

You might think we lived in a society in which divorce were not an option as the bachelors and bachelorettes burble on—in show after show, series after series—about finding "the soul mate I want to spend the rest of my life with" and about the "tremendous feelings" they are developing for whichever contestant they feel capable of loving "with all my heart and soul." Contestants remind themselves and one another to "follow your heart," to "listen to your heart," as if (and despite the observable evidence to the contrary) neither the eyes, the brain, nor the genitals deserve to be consulted. Just as the purpose of *Survivor* is to outwit, outplay, and outlast, the aim of the mating shows is to get the guy or girl and *get married*. It's sexual competition as spectator sport, true, but with an earnest, conservative face. There are deeply hurt feelings (the men scowl and shake their heads, the women weep) when suitors are rejected.

Even the families get involved. *Meet My Folks* invites competitors t[o] live in the same house with the lov[ed] object's parents. The show is partl[y] based on a popular film, starrin[g] Robert De Niro as a paranoid, snoop[y] ing, ex-CIA future father-in-law fro[m] hell. But by the time the plot reache[s] TV, it had deftly made the leap fro[m] Hollywood high comedy to Mai[n] Street reality, to the homes of suspi[-] cious couples who subject their grow[n] children's suitors to humiliating poly[-] graph tests and spy on them, via hid[-] den cameras, at play with their sons o[r] daughters in the hot tub. In fact, th[e] producers of these shows have gotte[n] precisely the sort of go-ahead fo[r] which John Ashcroft has long cam[-] paigned. Plenty of eavesdropping an[d] surveillance transpires; one Averag[e] Joe was eliminated after being secretl[y] videotaped insulting the 400-poun[d] "Cousin" Danielle, who was actuall[y] Melana in a fat suit. The mechanism[s] of surveillance—the cameras, listen[-] ing devices, and polygraph tests—[a]re have been seamlessly integrated int[o] everyday life.

Indeed, on several of these series[,] the last remaining suitors are taken[n] home to meet Mom and Dad, th[e] siblings, and best friends. And th[e] loved ones get to weigh in on which[h] prospective mate will fit into th[e] family. Because what's at stake her[e] is *marriage*. Only rarely does any[-] one—usually a concerned parent o[r] friend—inquire if this is really lov[e] or something manufactured by the producers.

In case we, too, have doubts abou[t] where all this is heading, the mini[-] series *Trista & Ryan's Wedding* cele[-] brates the union between a good[-] looking fireman and the former Mia[-] mi Heat cheerleader who was [a] runner-up on *The Bachelor* and wh[o] was brought back as *The Bachelorett[e]* so that this time, just to make thing[s] more equal, *she* could choose. Carry[-] ing us across the commercial break[s] with hints of prenuptial jitters ("Wil[l] the wedding go on as planned?"), it's a consumer blowout, a catalogue o[f] lavish table settings, flower arrange[-] ments, wedding gowns, and the plat[i]num- and diamond-encrusted "mos[t] expensive bridal shoe in the history

of the world." It's fitting that consumerism should be the theme of this theme wedding, not only because television is, obviously, a vehicle for advertising, or because the show's concept facilitates the product placement that's so much a part of reality programming, but also because the entire courtship has been a shopping event. A purchasing decision has been made among twenty-five suitable, competing products who labored long and hard to commodify and sell themselves.

In a nod to today's "reality," the array of suitors often includes a few nonwhite candidates, but although the contestants-of-color are rarely eliminated in the first round, no program so far has meant true love for an interracial couple. In fact, the gene pool is a shallow one. Ryan is a fireman, but he, like most male contestants, looks like a model. The women either resemble cheerleaders or *are* cheerleaders, perky blondes with cute bodies, pert noses, and slightly strangulated Tweetie Bird voices. Reality TV is not where you go to have your stereotypes undermined and subverted. The gay guys on *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* tend toward the nellie hysteric with the ability to out-shop Trista and a gift for initiating the nominally heterosexual male into the taboo joys of consumer culture.

Always gently testing the limit of what the culture will put up with, careful to give the bachelorette, as well as the bachelor, a chance to choose a mate, the networks are unlikely to take a chance on an *Average Jane* in which the genders are reversed, the male model obliged to pick from twenty-six ugly bachelorettes. Perhaps it's assumed that few viewers could accept the basic premise of the male beauty falling in love with the beast, regardless of her many good qualities. And perhaps it would be rightly feared that opinion might turn against a series that evoked the old-fashioned fraternity dogfight, those contests held to see which brother could bring the ugliest date to the party. It's worth noting that in the final episode of *Average Joe*, Melana rejected the ordinary-looking guy (who turned out to be a millionaire) in favor of one of the handsome contestants who, in a typical reality-TV plot twist, had been introduced into the game near the end of the series. Opting out of the game if one fails to find a suitable soul mate is simply not a possibility, for in the Republican corporatocracy there are always enough goods in the display case so that no sane shopper could refuse to make a purchase.

If these shows observe a sort of mass-market correctness, even as they reinforce gender stereotype and cliché, they also toe a fairly traditional line when it comes to class. The producers cast these scenarios from a solidly middle-class population. The well-off families in *Meet My Folks* have the sort of houses Americans are supposed to have: houses large enough to host the team of applicants competing to take their offspring on a romantic vacation. And the very wealthiest segment of the population is shown to have a heart of gold, just as we've always been led to believe. *The Simple Life* dispatches Lionel Richie's daughter (and Michael Jackson's goddaughter) Nicole and socialite Paris Hilton to slouch around an Arkansas farm, get grossed out in the cow barn, pretend not to know what Wal-Mart is, and reveal an underlying, insouciant sweetness.

In theory, *The Real World* should get credit for at least addressing the issue of race. But it's demoralizing to watch the new housemates move into their luxury digs and to be able to predict, from the start, that the one who's not going to get along with the others (especially not the racist provocateur who often shows up in the group) is the angry or militant black guy. One of these, the loose cannon David, was ultimately thrown out of the house and off the show in *The Real World: Los Angeles*. When the black guy in the Seattle series, Stephen, hit a female cast member in the face, he was permitted to remain only after agreeing to take an anger-management course. And so the cautionary, conservative message is clear: If these happen to be the only African Americans you've observed at close range, you might think twice before seeking one out as a roommate or a neighbor.

The ways in which *The Real World* has evolved over its eleven-year history provides a window onto the pressures that its producers must face to keep the show's young demographic tuning in. The most recent round, *The Real World: Paris*, focused on a group of American kids, installed in a suburban château, who spent more time in strip clubs than at the Louvre. Assigned to write an article on Versailles, two housemates downloaded the information from the Internet rather than bothering to go there. Rarely has the American public's notorious lack of interest in the world beyond our borders been made to seem cuter or more inconsequential: xenophobia as a harmless symptom of youthful ennui.

But it's the penultimate series, *The Real World: Las Vegas*, that became one of the most talked-about so far and may be a more reliable index of where reality TV is going. In their sybaritic penthouse at the Palms Casino Hotel, the Las Vegas suitemates far outdistanced their predecessors in their lack of inhibition about on-camera nudity, sex, bisexual threesomes in the hot tub, and round-the-clock debauchery. This fall, a cast member on *The Real World: San Diego* filed charges alleging that she was given a date-rape drug and assaulted by the friend of a housemate. Reportedly, the producers have been less than cooperative with the police investigation, and one wonders what role this incident will play in the show, whether it will be mined to inject the aging series with a revivifying shot of drama.

If television in general and reality TV in particular are indeed drugs, the principles of pharmacology would suggest that viewers will need an increasingly powerful fix just to maintain the same high. The producers of *The Real World* are currently launching *Starting Over*, a daytime series in which six women, lodged in a group home and aided by "life coaches," are put through the equivalent of rehab and forced to confront their problems with overeating, substance abuse, and social isolation. Unlike *The Real World*, which usually includes at least a few mentally healthy housemates, the women in *Starting Over* will presumably be selected to create a veritable zoo of conflicting personality disorders. On cable pay-per-view

# RASTROW'S ISLAND

*By T. Coraghessan Boyle*

*A car radio bleats,*
*"Love, O careless Love . . ."*
— Robert Lowell, "Skunk Hour"

She called and he was ready if not eager to sell, because he'd had certain reverses, the market gone sour, Ruth in bed with something nobody was prepared to call cancer, and his daughter, Charlene, waiting for his check in her dorm room with her unpacked trunk full of last year's clothes and the grub by texts with the yellow scars of the USED stickers seared into them spines. "That's right," she said, her old lady's voice like the creak of oarlocks out on the bay in the first breath of dawn, "Mrs. Rastrow, Alice Rastrow, and I used to know your mother when she was alive." There was a sharp crackling jolt of static, as if an electrical storm were raging inside the wires, then her voice came back at him. "I never have put much confidence in realtors. Do you want to talk or not?"

"So go," Ruth said. Her face had taken on the shine and color of the elephant ear fungus that grew out of the sodden logs in the ravine at the foot of the park. "Don't worry about me. Just go."

"You know what she's doing, don't you?"



"I know what she's doing."

"I never wanted to sell the place. I wanted it for Charlene, for Charlene's kids. To experience it the way I did, to have that, at least . . ." He saw the house then, a proud two-story assertion of will from the last century, four rooms down, four rooms up, the wood panels now and worn to a weathered silver, the barn adending into it at an angle on a bed of lichen-encrusted rock, the hedges gone to straw in the absence of human agency. "And when was the last time . . . ? Two summers ago? Three?"

"It's just a summer house." She reached out a hand you could see right through and lifted the rimed water glass from the night table. He watched the hand tremble, fumble for the pills, and he looked away, out the window and down the row of town houses and the slouch-ing, copper-flagged maples. "Isn't that the first thing to go when you . . . ?"

"Yeah," he said. "Yeah, I guess it is."

"I mean," and she paused to draw the water down, gulp the pills, "it's not as if we really need the place . . . or anything."

The water was choppy, the wind cold, and he sat in his car with the engine running and the heater on full as the ferry clambered at the seething white rod of the wave, and the island separated itself from the far shore and began to fan out across the front. When the rain came up, it was a spot or two that might have been nothing more than the spray thrown up by the bow, and then it was a moving scrim that isolated him behind the wheel, he thought of watching on the windshield wipers, but he didn't. There was something about the opaque windows and

*T. Coraghessan Boyle's tenth novel, The Inner Circle, will be published by Viking in September. His last story for Harper's Magazine, "Here Comes," appeared in the November 2002 issue.*

Illustration by Sam Ward

gray of the windows. Rose bent to he stove in the corner, opened the grate, and laid two lengths of wood on the coals, and he stood there in he middle of the room watching the well of her figure in the tight wrap of her dress and the silken flex and release of the muscles in her shoulders. The room was cold as a meat locker.

He was watching Rose, transfixed by the incongruity of her bent over he black stove in her golden Chinese restaurant dress that clung to her backside as if it had been sewn over her skin, and the old lady's voice startled him, for all the pep talk he'd given himself. "You came," he said, and there she was in the doorway, looking no different from he picture he'd held of her.

She waited for him to say something in response, and he complied, murmuring, "Yes, sure, it's my pleasure," and then she was standing beside him and studying him out of her yellowed eyes. "Did you bring the papers?" she said.

He patted the briefcase. They were both standing, as if they'd just run into each other in a train station or the foyer at the theater, and Rose was standing too, awaiting the moment of release. "Rose," she said then, her eyes snapping sharply to her, "fetch my reading glasses, will you?"

The car had developed a cough on the drive up from Boston, a consumptive wheeze that rattled the floorboards when he depressed the accelerator, and now, with the influence of the sea, it had gotten worse. He turned the key in the ignition and listened to the slow creep of strangulation, then put the car in gear, backed out from beneath the oak, and made his hesitant way down the drive, wondering how much they were going to take him for this time when he brought it into the shop—if he made it to the shop, that is. There was no reward in any of this—he'd tried to keep the shock and disappointment from rising to his face when the old lady named her price—but at least, for now, there was the afternoon ahead and the rudimentary animal satisfaction of lunch, food to push into his craw and distract him, and he took the blacktop road back into the




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HARPER'S MAGAZINE

in the diner.

There were three other customers. The light through the windows was like concrete, like shale, the whole place hardened into its sediments. He didn't recognize anyone, and he ate his grilled cheese on white with his head down, gathering from the local newspaper that the creatures had deserted the sea en masse and left the lobstermen scrambling for government handouts and the cod fleet stranded at anchor. He'd countered the old lady's offer, but she'd held firm. At first he thought she hadn't even heard him. They'd moved to the sofa and she was looking through the papers, nodding her head like a battered old sea turtle fighting the pull of gravity, but she turned to him at last and said, "My offer is final. You might have known that." He fought himself, tried to get hold of his voice. He told her he'd think about it—sleep on it, he'd sleep on it—and have an answer for her in the morning.

It was raining again, a pulsing hard driven rain that sheathed the car and ran slick over the pavement till the parking lot gleamed like the sea beyond it. He didn't want to go back to the cottage in the motor court, not yet anyway—the thought of it entered his mind like a closed box floating in the void, and he had to squeeze his eyes shut to make it disappear—and he wasn't much of a drinker, so there wasn't any solace in the lights of the bar across the street. Finally, he decided to do what he'd known he was going to do all along: drive out to the house and have a last look at it. Things would have to be sold, he told himself, things stored, winnowed, tossed into the trash.

As soon as he pulled into the dirt drive that dropped off the road and into the trees, he could see he'd been fooling himself. The place was an eyesore, vandalized and vandalized again, the paint gone, windows shattered, the porch skewed away from the foundation as if it had been shoved by the hand of a giant. He switched off the ignition and stepped out into the rain. Inside, there was nothing of value: graffiti on the walls, a stained mattress in the center of the living room, every

stick of furniture broken down and t to the fire, the toilet bowl smash and something dead in the pit of rodent or bird, it didn't matter. wandered through the rooms, stoopi to pick things up and then drop the again. For a long while he stood at kitchen sink, staring out into the rai

The summer the Rastro drowned, he'd lived primitive, o on the water all day every day, swi ming, fishing, crabbing, racing fr island to shore and back again und the belly of his sail. That was t year his parents had their frien from the city out to stay, the Mo es—Mr. Morse, ventricose and ro ng, with his head set tenuously at the shaft of his neck, as if they'd gi en him the wrong size at birth, a Mrs. Morse, her face drawn to point beneath the bleached bird fl of her hair—and a woman wh worked with his mother as a secr tary, a divorcée with two shy pret daughters his own age. And wh was the woman's name? Jean. Ar the daughters? He could no long remember, but they wore sunsui that left their legs and midriffs bar the field of their taut browned flesh thrill and revelation to him. H couldn't look them in the fac couldn't even pretend. But th went off after a week to be with the father, and the Morses—and Jean stayed on with his parents, sunnin outside in the vinyl lawn chair drinking and playing cards so late the night that their voices—mu murous, shrill suddenly, murmuro again—were like the disquisitions the birds that wakened him at daw to go down to the shore and the bo and the sun that burned the chill o the water.

There was something tumultuou going on among them—all five them—but he didn't understan what it was till he looked back on years later. It was something sexua that much he knew, something to bidden and shameful and emotional ly wrought. He lay in his bed upstair twelve years old and discovering hi own body, and they shouted recrimi nations at each other a floor down Mr. Morse took him and Jean ou fishing for pollack one afternoon, th big man shirtless and rowing, Jean i

the bow, an ice bucket sprouting a bristle of green-necked bottles between them. He fished. Baited his hook with squid and dropped the weighted line into the shifting gray deep. Behind him, Mr. Morse slipped his hand up under Jean's blouse and they kissed and wriggled against each other until they couldn't seem to catch their breath, even as he peered down into the water and pretended he didn't notice. He remembered a single voice raised in agony that night, a voice caught between a sob and a shriek, and in the morning Mrs. Morse was gone. A few days later, her husband got behind the wheel of Jean's car and the two of them pulled out of the drive. Nobody said a word. He sat with his parents at dinner—coleslaw, corn on the cob, hamburgers his father seared on the grill—and nobody said a word.

He was back at the motor court by five, and he called Ruth just to hear the sound of her voice and to lie to her about the old lady's offer. Yes, he told her, yes, it was just what he'd expected and he'd close the deal tomorrow, no problem. Yes, he loved her. Yes, good night. Then, though he wasn't a drinker, he walked into the village and sat at the bar while the Celtics went through the motions up on the television screen and the six or seven patrons gathered there either cheered or groaned as the occasion demanded. He let two beers grow warm by the time he got to the bottom of them, and he had a handful of saltines to steady his stomach. He was hoping someone would mention Mrs. Rastrow, offer up some information about her, some gossip about what she was doing to the island, about Rose, but nobody spoke to him, nobody even looked at him. By seven-thirty he was back in the cottage paging through half a dozen back issues of a news magazine the woman at the desk had given him with an apologetic thrust of her hand, and she was sorry they didn't have any TV for him to watch but maybe he'd be interested in these magazines?

He was reading of things that had happened five years ago—big stories, crises, and he couldn't for the life of him remember how any of them had turned out—when there was a knock at the door. It was Rose, dressed in a bulky sweater and blue jeans. The black patent-leather pumps she'd been wearing earlier had been replaced by tennis shoes. Her ankles were bare. "Hi," she said. "I thought I'd drop by to see how you were doing."

Everything in him seemed to seize up. How he was doing? He was doing poorly, feeling trapped and bereft, pressed for money, for luck, for hope, so worried about Ruth and her doctors and the tests and prescriptions and bills he didn't know how he was going to survive the night ahead, let alone the rest of the winter and the long unspooling year to come. Mrs. Rastrow—her employer, her *ally*—had cut the heart out of him. So how was he doing? He couldn't even open his mouth to tell her.

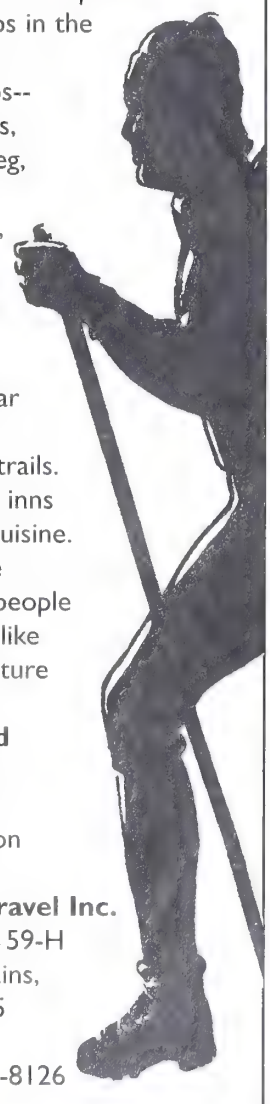
They were both standing at the open door. The night smelled like an old dishrag that had been frozen and defrosted again. "Because I felt bad this afternoon," she said. "I mean, not even offering you something to drink or a sandwich. Alice can be pretty abrupt, and I wanted to apologize."

"Okay," he said, "sure, I appreciate that." He was in his stocking feet, his shirt open at the collar to reveal the T-shirt beneath, and was it clean? His hair. Had he combed his hair? "Okay," he said again, not knowing what else to do.

"Do you have a minute?" She peered into the room as if it might conceal something she needed to be wary of. Her shoulders were bunched, her eyes gone wide. The night air leaked in around her, carrying a sour lingering odor now of panic and attrition—a skunk, somebody had surprised a skunk somewhere out on the road. Suddenly she was smiling. "I guess I'm the potato peeler salesman now, huh?"

"No," he said, "no," too forcefully, and he didn't know what he was up to—what *she* was up to, a young woman who lived with an old woman and wore tight silk Chinese dresses on an island that had no Chinese restaurants and no need of them—and then he was pulling the door back and inviting her in, their bodies pressed close in passing, and the door shutting behind them.


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"I'd offer you something," he said, "but—" And he [illegible] and they both laughed. Was he [illegible] "Is that it?"

"I brought [illegible]," she said, snapping open her purse to remove [illegible] on the night table. [illegible] stains on the bag, translucent continents, headlands, isthmuses painted across the surface in a random geography. "Tuna," she said. "Tuna on [illegible]—lifting the sandwiches in [illegible] from the bag and holding two cans of beer aloft. "I thought you'd be hungry. With the diner closing early, I mean." She pushed a beer across the table and handed him a sandwich. "I didn't know if you'd know that—that they close early this time of year?"

He told her he hadn't known, or he'd forgotten—or hadn't even thought of it, really—and he thanked her for thinking of him. They sipped their beers in silence a moment, the light on the night table the only illumination in the room, and then he said, "You know, that house belonged to my father. That's his signature on the deed. We spent summers here when I was a kid, best summers of my life. I was here when Mrs. Rastrow's—when Ronald and Elyse drowned. I was maybe twelve at the time, and I didn't really—I didn't understand you *could* die. Not if you were young. Up till that point it was old people who'd died, the lady next door—Mrs. Jennings—my grandmother, a great aunt."

She just nodded, but he could see she was right there with him, the brightness in her eyes, the way she chewed, sipped. He felt the beer go to his head. He wanted to ask about her, how she'd come to the island—was it an ad in the paper, lumber heiress in need of a companion to wear silk Chinese dresses in a remote cottage, room and board and stipend and all the time in the world to paint, write, dream?—but he didn't want to be obvious. She was exotic. Chinese. The only Chinese person on the island, and it would be rude, maybe even faintly racist, to ask.

[illegible] sandwich to her mouth [illegible] She wiped her lips with a paper napkin, [illegible] and said, "You know, it's no use. She's never going to go any higher."

He was embarrassed suddenly—to bring all that into this?—and he just shrugged. It was a fait accompli. He was defeated and he knew it.

"She knows about your wife. And you know she could pay a fair price, even though the place is run-down, because it's not the money—she has all the money anybody could want—but she won't. I know her. She won't budge." She lifted her face so that the light cut it in two, the ridge of her nose and one eye shining, the rest in shadow. "She's just going to let it rot anyway. That's what she's doing with all of them."

"Spoils her view?"

She smiled. "Something like that."

Then the question he'd been swallowing since she'd appeared at the door, finally pried up off his tongue by the beer: "This isn't some kind of negotiation, is it? I mean, she didn't send you, did she?"

The question left a space for all the little sounds of the night to creep in: the cry of a shorebird, the wind scouring the beach, something ticking in the depths of the heater. She dropped her eyes. "No, that's not it at all," she murmured.

*Well, what is it then?* he wanted to say—almost said—but he felt a tightening across the surface of him, his flesh prickling and contracting as if all his defenses were going down at once, and the answer came to him. She was here for him, for a quick fix for loneliness and despair, here to listen to a voice besides Mrs. Rastrow's, to sleep in another bed, any bed, make contact where before there had been none. He got up from the bed, moved awkwardly toward her, and she got up too. They were as close as they'd been at the door. He could smell her, a sweet heat rising from the folds of the sweater, caught in the coils of her hair. "Did you want to maybe go over to the tavern?" she said. "For another beer, I mean? I only brought the two."

He didn't want another beer, hadn't wanted the first one. "No," he said in a whisper, and then he was holding her, pulling her to him as if she had no bones in her body, everything new and soft and started from scratch. Her cheek was pressed to his, scintillating, electric, *her cheek*, and she let him kiss her and her bones were gone and she was melting down away from the chair and into the bed. She didn't taste like Ruth. Didn't feel like her. Didn't conform to him the way Ruth had through all those years when she was well and alive and lit up like a meteor, and he had to say something, he didn't have any choice. "I don't think so," he said. "I'm sorry. I really don't."

She was beneath him on the bed, her hair in a sprawl. He pulled away from her—pushed himself up as if he were doing some sort of exercise, calisthenics of the will, the heaviest of heavy-lifting—and before he knew what he was doing he was out the door and into the night. He thought he heard her call out his name, but the surf took it away. He was furious, raging, pounding his way down the dark strand as if every step was a murder—*That dried-up old bitch, and who does she think she is, anyway?*

A sudden wind came up off the shore to rake the trees, the branches rattling like claws, and the smell assaulted him again, the smell of rottenness and corruption, of animals and their glands. He kept walking, the wind in his face. Head down, shoulders pumping, he followed his legs till he got beyond the lights of the farthest house and the sky closed down and melded with the shore. There was something there ahead on the beach, a shape spawned from the shadows, and it took him a moment to see what it was: a trash can, let's all pitch in and keep the island clean, turned on its side in a spill of litter. And inside the can, the animal itself, coiled round the wedge of its head and the twin lights of its eyes. "Get out of that!" he shouted, looking for something to throw. "Get out!"

In the morning he made his way back up the long dirt drive and signed away the property. By noon, he was gone. ■

# A FISTFUL OF PEANUTS

## George W. Bush raises $3 million at a mall

*By David Samuels*

Above the enameled plain of truck stops and diners and focus-group mills rises the latest dazed version of the quadrennial American lament: What happened? Is George W. Bush a hero or a flop? For the one third of the American electorate that regularly votes Republican, the answer is hero. For the Democratic one third, the answer is flop. All that can be said for certain in this age of politically motivated confusion is that the stable party structures that once provided presidential candidates with money and votes are gone. What remains of the old-time American electoral process is the institution of the campaign, paid for in cash—the stage-managed process of public appearances by the candidates, and the ever more sophisticated sloganeering, the stray words or phrases that emerge from focus groups and stick to voters' minds like lint after being endlessly repeated on television, in phone-bank calls and direct-mail solicitations, in what has become a more or less fully interactive process, the thousand-and-one-fingered massage of the opinion-polled collective.

The process of reelecting a president of the United States can be understood as a single-player game like Pac-Man, the old Reagan-era arcade favorite in which a smiley face devours a trail of luminescent yellow dots—each dot in this case representing a bundle of $3 million or $4 million assembled by a team of fund-raisers in a hotel banquet hall near an airport. The circuit of fund-raising events having been set up in advance by the President's finance team, the goal is for the bundlers to pack the rooms with $2,000 donors while the candidate gobbles up enough campaign-funding dots to placate the pollsters and the phone-bank gods and to keep the image makers happy while avoiding Inky, Pinky, Blinky, and Clyde. Last year, George Bush's total of 130,000,000 campaign dollars was more than the combined scores for Howard Dean, John Kerry, John Edwards, Wesley Clark, and the rest of the President's Democratic opponents, totals so puny by comparison that Democrats can be said to have been playing Jr. Pac-Man. Individuals who write checks, out of conviction or simply for sport, are largely irrelevant to the campaigns. We are only pixels—fractions of a dot.




The Houston Galleria is a perfect place for the President to run up his score. It's the best shopping mall south of Los Angeles. Actually, the Galleria is four malls in one. The old Galleria, Houston's original luxury indoor shopping mall, has a year-round ice-skating rink, so you can shop and skate in the middle of July, when the temperature climbs over a hundred degrees and the humidity is so bad that the outdoor parking offered at inferior area malls can be hazardous to your breathing. In addition to the ice-skating rink and multilevel indoor parking, the Galleria features more than 2.4 million square feet of retail space and more than 350 fine retail establishments, including

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Illustration by Graham Roumieu

With the new wing that opened in [illegible] became the fifth-largest mall in the nation, a temple to America's thriving addiction to shopping. The new wing employs nine types of stone and several more of wood, suspended glass balconies, plush leather seating, skylights, a Starbuck's, three premium office towers, and two Westin hotels—the West in Oaks and the Westin Galleria—which are popular destinations for luxury-brand shoppers from Mexico City as well as for wealthy Houstonians, nearly 700 of whom have gathered this afternoon in the Westin Galleria banquet room to pay tribute to the forty-third president of the United States, George W. Bush. Houston is a city that belongs more to the President's father, George H. W. Bush, the forty-first president, who represented Houston's Seventh Congressional District between 1967 and 1971. After losing the 1992 election to Bill Clinton, Bush 41 retired to Houston, where the local airport was renamed in his honor.

"*On the boats and on the planes, they're coming to America!*" Neil Diamond's stentorian voice rings out.

"*Today! Today! Today!*"

"Oh, wow," a pretty girl in a party dress exclaims. The music is turned up so loud that most of the Sunday-afternoon crowd has no choice but to drink pretty heavily in preparation for the President's arrival, still more than an hour away. In the middle of the windowless function room, which suggests a cross between a casino floor and a concrete bunker, are three round tables decorated with an electric lit Lone Star boot set in the middle of the canapés. The vegetable platter on each table includes a selection of freezer-burnt carrots and cauliflower, while the cheese plate offers supermarket-sliced sticks of smoked gouda and cheddar. Deep-fried items that look like egg rolls appear on closer inspection to be quesadillas; the breaded heart-attack chicken fingers are unaccompanied by dipping sauce. The high-top round cocktail tables scattered around the room boast finger bowls filled with peanuts and pretzels, to alleviate the rigors of the open bar. Altogether, a dedicated scavenger working these tables might be able to put together the equivalent of the in-flight meal on a commuter flight to Phoenix. After almost an hour's worth of the open bar, barely any of the food has been touched.

Chad Sweet is a perfect candidate to be raising money for George Bush in Houston. A handsome, dark-haired young banker who works for Goldman Sachs, Chad looks like a grown-up version of one of the rich-but-decent preppy characters on Fox's nighttime teen drama *The O.C.* One thing that makes Chad a likely fund-raiser for George Bush is that his boss at Goldman, Peter Coneway, was a big Bush fund-raiser in 2000. There is also the fact of Chad Sweet's name, which is almost too good to be true. The pretty girl in the party dress is Chad's sister. She is here to help Chad meet his fund-raising quota. A friendly, peaceful-seeming young woman, she is wearing a maternal but sexy halter dress; she supports the war in Iraq, she says, "regardless if there were any weapons of mass destruction or not." What matters, Chad's sister explains, is that the President did something. He acted, and acted decisively, in defense of America's children and Sunday afternoons at the mall.

By the nearest pretzel table, I meet two young lawyers, Jesse and David, who work for a powerful Houston firm that represents clients in the oil and gas business. We agree that Chicago, New York, and Boston are good cities in which to watch a baseball game. I tell them that I am writing a movie about baseball, which is more or less true.

"You should try to go to a game here in Houston then," Jesse says. "The stadium is great."

"There's a retractable roof," David adds. "It's kind of cool. It can retract in five to seven minutes."

Jesse calls out to his friend Patrick Hughes, a tall, dark-haired attorney in his mid-thirties, who walks over and shakes everyone's hand.

"I'm glad I'm not the only one who wrote a check," Patrick says. "It seems like everyone I talk to says, 'Hell, no, I didn't write a check.'"

"I didn't have a choice," Jesse says. "There's a lot of muscle in my office."

"Yes, sir. We all wrote a check," David says. "I'm really getting tired of it too." Jesse and David don't give their last names, because the senior partner in their law firm is a major donor to the Bush reelection campaign who yearns to represent the United States as an ambassador to a foreign country. ("I think any country will do," David says.) In keeping with customary practice in recent Republican and Democratic administrations, nearly two dozen of Bush's biggest contributors, many of them only casual acquaintances of the candidate himself, received the keys to U.S. ambassadors' mansions in return for their prowess in helping the President eat more dots; Robert Jordan, senior partner in the Houston-based law firm of Baker Botts, is the current U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia. The necessity for these rituals to take place in banquet halls is dictated by three decades' worth of "reform laws" that prohibit any individual from donating more than $2,000 to the political candidate of his or her choice. The result is a system in which ambassadorial hopefuls must round up bushels of checks from friends, relatives, vendors, contractors, and young attorneys who hope to make partner. In the 2000 presidential campaign, nearly 60 percent of the money that George W. Bush received came from 59,279 donations of what was then the maximum legal amount of $1,000—more than triple the number of maximum donations compiled by any competitor.

One symptom of the easier availability of $2,000 checks to the Bush campaign this time around is that fund-raisers no longer receive credit for donations gathered by those they recruited, as they would in any decent incentive-based network marketing system, like Amway; they get credit only for checks that they hoover up themselves. Fund-raisers pledge to meet target amounts and are assigned a tracking number, which appears on every check they bring in to the campaign. Those seeking the campaign's highest fund-raising designation, that of

Ranger," must come up with the quivalent of a hundred personal ıecks for $2,000 made out to "Bush-heney '04." Those who bring in 100,000 worth of checks are "Pio-eers." There are performance incen-ves along the way. Those who raised least $50,000 for the Bush campaign's ckoff dinner in Manhattan on June 3, 2003, were treated to a special off-ıe-record "leadership luncheon" with arl Rove, the President's chief polit-al strategist. By recruiting his sister, er husband, and another eight friends, o-workers, and business contacts to uy ten $2,000 tickets to this after-oon's event, Chad Sweet has earned imself a photograph with the Presi-ent and the First Lady in a smaller allroom upstairs, where he is mark-ıg time right now along with the oth-r fifty or so bundlers whose big-ıoney contributions are represented ı the ballroom below in human form.

"It's not like it was back in the eight-es," explains Patrick Hughes, who orks for Haynes and Boone, a Dal-as-based firm with what is reputed to e the largest white-collar-defense prac-ıce in Texas. "There's been some oil nd gas fallout," he adds, when I ask for igns of economic damage from the ter-orist attacks, recession, and war. "Oil raders, every twenty years they go ankrupt." A fan of George Bush, he is ccustomed to his lowly status as a pix-l, a serf on the campaign-finance farm. This is more than I expected," he says, vhen I complain about the paucity of ny $2,000-a-plate spread. "I'm going to et myself a piece of that chicken."

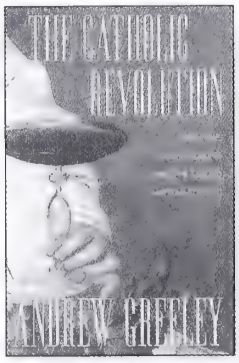
Mixing with the plebes by the bar is oe B. Allen III, the politically wired ormer senior partner of the Houston uper law firm Vinson and Elkins. He eft the firm after the Enron debacle. A Bush Pioneer in the last election, he is tanding with a spidery, desiccated-ooking lobbyist in a blue-and-white eersucker suit, a Dust Bowl vision of Uncle Sam.

"This isn't exactly our second odeo," Allen confirms. Vinson and Elkins provided more money for George Bush during the last election ycle than any other corporate entity n Texas. "There are very few people n Houston you can point to and say these are the Bush people," he con-ides, over the blare of "Living in



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NOTES FOR "FORCED ENTRY":

*The answers at 11A, 22A, 27A, 36A, 39A, 7D, 10D, 14D, and 25D are words that can be seen as having one element inside another, i.e., SCOURING is "CO" in "SURING," yielding the entry COINSURING. Similarly, E(L)ATION,* L(IN)EATION; *DER(B)IES,* B(IN)DERIES; *GE(T)S,* T(IN)GES; *E(WE)R,* WE(IN)ER; *PLAT(T)E,* T(IN)PLATE; *G(LAND)S,* LAND(IN)GS; *SPECT(RE)S,* RE(IN)SPECTS; *A(RET)E,* RET(IN)AE.

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 1. ant(1)thetical*; 11. s(c.)ouring; 12. the-F(if)t(h); 13. n-an-keen; 14. *; 18. (tram)pled; 19. la-le (rev.); 20. knew-Loew (homophone); 22. elation*; 23. n-oilman; 24. be(r)g; 27. derbies*; 28. p(iglet*)s; 31. jo(l)ts; 33. hidden; 34. nu(1)t; 35. hidden; 36. gets, St-e.g. (rev.); 37. *; 38, S.L.-ants; 39. (f)ewer.

DOWN: 1. a-Ct.; 2. pun; 3. (celes)t(ially)-i.e.; 4. (s)in-Fall-(B)ible; 5. homophone; 7. P-latte; 8. in-k.-pot; 9. hidden; 10. g(igantic)-l.-and-s.; 14. spectres*; 15. elm-O; 16. P(uzzle)-armigiana*; 17. ten-antle(r)s-s.; 21. *; 24. bronc-Hi; 25. arete*; 26. virgi(n)-L; 29. em-met; 30. warts (rev.); 31. initials of five words; 32. stai*-r.

America," the James Brown number. "The key people are mostly in Midland and Dallas."

A Vinson and Elkins secretary is lurking nearby, dressed all in pastel. "I do love Laura Bush," she confirms, when I ask her if she enjoys dressing like the First Lady. Together we [illegible] a small knot of ladies in golf [illegible] and Hermès scarves, representatives of a spooky subterranean world where everyone loves George W. Bush, or is eager at least to score points with the boss. The secretary is understandably reluctant to give me her name. She works for partner Thomas Marinis, another lawyer for Enron.

The next donor I meet is more forthcoming. Willie Carl of Beeville, Texas, is a pleasant, moonfaced man who proudly claims to be the owner of two ranches in addition to a hunting spread and an office building downtown.

"Well, good for you!" he exclaims with real pleasure, when I tell him that I'm from New York. When I mention the effects of the summer humidity in Houston, he claps a friendly hand on my shoulder. "We have air-conditioning," he explains.

A History Channel buff, he also enjoys watching programs about current events. "I'm a Tony Blair fan," he says. "Did you get to hear that Tony Blair speech on Fox? I thought he was Patrick Henry—'Give me liberty or give me death!'" Willie Carl chuckles. "I've had two British friends, they're both dead, one died of cancer and the other flew a plane into the ground," he says in a speculative voice, as if wondering what conclusions a man in late middle age might rightfully draw about the transience of all flesh. When I ask about the absence of Stetson hats in the room, he gives me a doubtful glance.

"I've got an uncle here, he might have on his Stetson," he says. "He was probably the last guy in Houston to take off his open-road hat." He looks mournfully out at the trickle of well-dressed men and women who are now joining the crowd by the bar. "You remember LBJ's hat? Well, that's the same one. The open-road hat. There's a lot of different Stetson hats and they all have different names. I wear my Stetson when I go check on the ranch, where we have exactly two cows, which is really about all you want."

All in all, he says, George W. Bush has been "America's president" in the years since he was elected president.

"This kid, he's a real person. I'd give him my last dollar so he could be president for the next four years," he says. When I ask him why he isn't upstairs with the President and the First Lady right now, he sighs, loud enough to make me feel bad for asking.

"I've had all I need," Willie Carl says, with maybe a touch of defiance, tucking his thumbs in his hand-tooled black leather belt. "Enough to pay for my $2,000 egg roll and live in a million-and-a-half-dollar house, paid for, and enjoy my 3,000-acre rice farm. I just don't have any money, that's all."

"Well, gang, we are doing well in Texas," says the tall, silver-haired man at the podium, Fred Meyer. His sunburnt skin glowing against his white shirt, dark suit, and blue tie, Meyer stands with an easy, aw-shucks manner before a patriotic backdrop in which the flags of the United States of America and the Lone Star Republic of Texas are given equal billing.

"In the 2000 election, it was Texas that led the nation in financial contributions to the GWB campaign," Meyer says with an easy grin. "Ladies and gentlemen, we're going to do it again in 2004."

A former captain of the Purdue Boilermakers' marching band, where he played the piccolo, Meyer is a natural master of ceremonies. His ecumenical demeanor hides the true face of one of America's most terrifyingly successful political fund-raisers, the man who transformed the Texas Republican Party from the sleepy, relatively impoverished back-office operation it was in 1988, when he took it over, to the triumphant financial and electoral juggernaut it is today, with Republicans in all twenty-nine statewide offices, including two senators, the governor and lieutenant governor, and speakers of the house and the senate. As chairman of George W. Bush's Victory 2000 campaign, Meyer directed Republican fund-raising throughout the fifty states, then he served as fund-raiser in chief for the presidential inaugural. Over the last six weeks, Meyer explains, the Bush Cheney '04 campaign has raised more than half of the total raised during the entire eighteen months of the 2000 campaign. To Meyer's right, a sign-language interpreter spells out the symbol for financial contributions with a wide gesture of her hands, indicating the size of the Bush campaign's recent haul.

"Your money goes first and your heart goes afterwards," Meyer says, in a soothing voice. "But they're both together once your money's in the till."

Now that he has explained the facts of life to any doubtful hearts in the crowd, the former state party chair goes on the offensive, attacking "the media, trial lawyers, and various extremist groups that are constantly harassing the President and the programs that the majority of the American people support." Having tossed some red meat to the one or two die-hards in the crowd, for old time's sake, he nods benignly, looking out over the audience of secretaries, lawyers, contractors, subcontractors, and big-money fund-raisers, still glowing from their $20,000 photo ops with the President and the First Lady.

"Our President has integrity beyond question," he intones. "Our President does what is best for all Americans. Our President will stay the course, and he has the courage to do that. And he will again demonstrate to this country the great, strong leader that he is."

The big-money donors in the crowd this afternoon have reason to applaud. To date, 43 of the 538 known Pioneers from the 2000 campaign have been rewarded with federal appointments, including ambassadorships to France, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Portugal, New Zealand, and more than a dozen other countries, as well as positions with various government boards and commissions. Two of the 2000 Pioneers have made it into the President's Cabinet: Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao and former Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, director of Homeland Security. Still, it would be wrong to characterize the sponsors of tonight's event as being interested merely in accumulating fancy letterhead and second and third vacation homes at taxpayer expense. They are here after bigger game. John W. Johnson of Permian Mud Service, Inc., is in-

rested in tax laws and the regulatory ructure that governs the energy busi- ess. Pat Oxford works for Bracewell nd Patterson, a large Texas law firm nat represents banks. Stephen Payne, lobbyist, has plenty of clients who e interested in contracts with Hal- burton or its local subsidiary, the con- ruction firm of Kellogg, Brown and oot—lifelong backers of the last Tex- n president, Lyndon B. Johnson, and ne recent recipient of U.S. Army con- acts for services in Iraq worth a po- ential $7 billion. Tom Loeffler, head f the law firm of Loeffler, Jonas and uggey, another sponsor of today's vent, knows the ins and outs of such rrangements better than anyone else n the room. As the congressman serv- ng George W. Bush's hometown of Midland, Texas, he made friends with ne President early on, sharing his in- erest in hunting, football, baseball, nd politics. As a lobbyist, he came to epresent Tom Hicks, who made George W. Bush rich by buying his hares in the Texas Rangers baseball eam, a transaction that allowed Mr. Bush to run for governor. Loeffler has epresented the Monsanto Company, he American Gaming Association, nd the Nuclear Energy Institute, a orporate umbrella group whose mem- bers stand to profit greatly from the Bush Administration's energy policies.

That the presidential photo-op rowd has come downstairs to mingle s a clear signal that the President him- elf will soon be on his way. As bundlers nd small-time donors alike crowd the tage, I find myself next to a tall, blond, it-looking man named Steve Paper- naster, who was just upstairs with the President and who says he spent "plen- y of time" at the governor's mansion n Austin.

"We love the Bushes," says Paper- naster's pretty blonde wife, Kathy. 'They're incredibly warm, wonderful, gracious people. I don't think that be- ng in Washington has changed them one bit."

Once mentioned as a possible Cab- net member in Bush's administration, Papermaster never made it to Wash- ington. Instead, as the head of Agillion, Papermaster became one of the most visible symbols of the late 1990s' tech- stock madness in Austin, spending $3 million on a 30-second advertising spot to promote his Internet company dur- ing the 2000 Super Bowl. According to a recent lawsuit filed against Agillion and Papermaster, the company suc- ceeded in attracting only "a few dozen" customers for its services; revenues were so inconsequential, the lawsuit states, "that management never recorded a single dollar in revenue in their inter- nal bookkeeping." Nevertheless, Pa- permaster spent half a million dollars to take Agillion's employees on a trip to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, where he donned a sombrero and addressed his staff through a wireless microphone while cantering his horse along the beach. In 2001, Agillion bought an- other Super Bowl ad. Six months later the company filed for bankruptcy.

If Steve Papermaster is in the market for lessons about how to spend his shareholders' money, he could do worse than to look to Michael Dell, one of the sponsors of this afternoon's event. After contributing $250,000 to the Republican National Committee in 2002, Dell received a seat on the President's Export Council, as well as a $500 million contract to provide computers to the Pentagon—a two- thousandfold return on the Austin tech entrepreneur's initial investment, for less than one tenth the cost of one of Papermaster's Super Bowl ads. Equally instructive is the story of Rich Kinder, the former president of En- ron. Healthy and tan, he stands near his wife in a privileged corner by the stage, having suffered no apparent damage from his former employer's im- plosion—he left the company in 1996 with a $200 Swiss Army watch on his wrist and a $30 million severance pack- age. He also took Ken Lay's personal secretary, a woman named Nancy Mc- Neil. After divorcing his wife Anne and marrying McNeil, Kinder started buying up Enron's tangible assets, par- laying his golden parachute into three companies with a combined market capitalization of $13.5 billion.

To the high-society gossips in the crowd, this afternoon's successful fund- raiser for the President is the second leg of a social trifecta that began with Nan- cy Kinder's successful fund-raising ball for the Houston Museum of Fine Arts last year and will conclude with the completion of the $12 million house the Kinders are building on Houston's Lazy Lane. Those with more earthy in- terests will note that Rich's company, Kinder Morgan, is the largest publicly traded oil- and gas-pipeline limited partnership in the United States. With 25,000 miles of pipeline and 80 termi- nals, Kinder Morgan moves 2 million barrels of gasoline and other petroleum products per day, and up to 7.8 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas. In a June 11, 2003, conference call with analysts and investors, Kinder laid out the current state of his business.

"The Texas pipelines have been ex- periencing pretty good load, that's of course a lot of hot weather in Texas," Kinder explained. "And our Rocky Mountain pipelines have been run- ning pretty full, too."

Earlier that day, Kinder Morgan an- nounced that it would increase its div- idend 167 percent, from $.60 to $1.60 per year. The increase in the dividend made sound business sense, Kinder as- sured David Fleischer, an analyst at Goldman Sachs, thanks to the current occupant of the White House, who would continue to serve for the next four and a half years.

"We would expect continuous in- creases in the dividend on a going- forward basis," Kinder informed his fel- low corporate contributor to the Pres- ident's reelection campaign. "Assum- ing that this tax regime is in ef- fect, and it will be, I'm sure, through 2008."

After a short intermission, Fred Meyer returns to the stage, accompa- nied by white-haired Houston banker Ben Love, the former chairman of Texas Commerce Bancshares (now part of J. P. Morgan Chase), and the state's governor, Rick Perry.

"It's my great honor to introduce our great friend, a strong leader, a great Texan. He's led America with a strong hand and a clear vision," Meyer says, gesturing broadly at the man to his right. Having raised $4 million the previous evening in Dal- las, and then spent the night on his ranch, the President of the United States looks calm and relaxed in a dark navy suit. He's a healthy ath- lete at the top of his game, standing in a patch of empty space in front of the American flag. His wife, Laura, stands beside him.

"[illegible] committed to freedom, and freedom," the fund-raiser offers. "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States."

"I just tell you, it's great to see so many familiar faces," George Bush begins, nodding at the crowd. "A couple of them scolded me when I was a kid." Nodding his head like a schoolboy at the applause, he continues with the traditional invocation. "A lot of the people in this room worked hard to see to it that I became the governor, and I want to thank you all for your continued friendship and your support," he says, allowing a little Texas grit to filter into his voice. "I want to thank you for your loyalty to our country, and I want to thank you for comin' tonight."

Editorialists don't like the President. His blunt talk, the way he stands with his legs apart, his very political DNA, inspire a fevered hatred in the one third of the electorate that can be counted on to vote Democratic, a hatred that in turn inspires a reflexive support of the President in the reliably Republican third of the electorate. Like Bill Clinton before him, his aim is to capitalize on the hatred of his foes and the support of his friends in order to win over the remaining third of the electorate. With the hatred of the left assured, and his party's core voters safely in the bank, he operates in a gravity-free state, discarding his stated dislike of nation-building and foreign adventures, his opposition to affirmative action, his preference for balanced budgets, his opposition to increased immigration, and other keystones of his carefully focus-grouped persona from the 2000 campaign. Freed from the laws of gravity, the President can decapitate unfriendly regimes, occupy foreign countries, rewrite the tax code, send astronauts to the moon and Mars if he likes, while turning a $200 billion surplus into a $500 billion deficit, buying the votes of the uncommitted middle at zero cost to his political base.

Bush makes an after-dinner joke about a recent encounter with a pair of mating elephants in Botswana. "Learned a lot [illegible] re about our party's mascot," he [illegible] As he speaks, it is possible to hear the father's clipped, East Coast Y[illegible] accent beneath the [illegible] laugh.

"We're going to need your help at the grass-roots level," he says, rehearsing the lines of the stump speech he will deliver another ten dozen times before the election next fall. "We're going to need you to talk to your neighbors and to send out the flyers and put up the SIGNS and turn out the VOTE."

He tunes up the Texas in his voice another notch. "And I'm gettin' ready," he says, flexing his shoulders to an appreciative laugh. "And I'm loosenin' up." The crowd laughs again. "It's a funny time for politics," the President reflects. "Right now, I'm focused on the PEOPLE's business in Washington, D.C."

Hitting the word "people" a bit too hard, the President has thrown off his rhythm. He looks mad. "We will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this nation secure, and strong, and prosperous, and free," he recites, with a slight scowl. Her head tilted to the side, Laura Bush focuses her attention on a point somewhere out there in middle space. She has complemented her pink suit this afternoon with a silver necklace.

"I'm glad Laura is here tonight," her husband says, with an appreciative nod. "I love her a lot, and I hope she loves me a lot for dragging her out of Texas." The crowd hollers at the phony gallantry, but one look at Laura Bush's face during such moments is enough to convince even the most hardened observer of political spouses that her husband is serious—the First Lady couldn't care less about health-care policy or haute-couture dresses. Laura Bush hides in plain sight, projecting a steady beam of approval that doesn't disguise the fact that she would rather not be up here on the stage. What the First Couple have in common isn't politics but rather the fact that they grew up in Midland, where their early lives were marked by death and by the excessive consumption of liquor. George W. Bush lost his sister and grew up to become an alcoholic. Laura Bush killed a high school friend in a head-on collision. Now she's the First Lady and he's the President—a pair of privileged people who suffered and then cleaned up their act, a born-again Tom and Daisy Buchanan who have learned that they are no better than the lowest wretch.

The President is duly grateful. He praises Rick Perry, the tall, boyish-looking Republican standing to the President's right, as "the right guy to be governor of Texas," because he "watches the people's money very closely," and he thanks Nancy Kinder for "puttin' on this party tonight," as well as everyone else who worked so hard. Then the President turns to his left, searching out a familiar face in the crowd.

"I want to thank my friend Tom DeLay for being here," the President says, acknowledging the old Republican dragon from Sugarland, Texas. A sallow-faced former pest exterminator known as "the Hammer," DeLay is the majority leader of the U.S. House of Representatives. His latest contribution to the national debate is something called STOMP—the Strategic Task Force for the Organization and Mobilization of People, a group of specialized volunteers who, according to the congressman's website, will be deployed across the country in time for next fall's elections.

"Congressman DeLay is a leader . . . ," Bush says, his voice trailing off. What more is there to say? Tom DeLay is a nasty piece of work, the type of friend who is best kept under wraps.

"Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst is here," Bush says, adding insult to injury by ungratefully lumping the majority leader in with a procession of state and local officials, including the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives and Joe Nixon, a patsy for the health-care industry who was named one of the worst legislators in the state in the July 2003 issue of *Texas Monthly*.

"I came to this office to solve problems," he announces, "not to pass them on to future presidents and future generations."

Invigorated by the declarative strength of his lines, the President stands up straight behind the podium.

"Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got," he pronounces. "We have captured or killed many key leaders of Al Qaeda. And the rest of them know we're on their trail. . . . Those

gimes chose defiance," he says, manfully resisting the urge to squint, "and those regimes ARE NO MORE."

The President nods his head in self-assent, then presses on. At the words "morale was beginning to suffer," the sign-language lady makes a sad, sinking motion with her hands.

"Fifty million people . . . once lived under tyranny. Today they live in freedom," the President proclaims, in a measured voice, leading up to the clincher. "We acted."

He leans back a bit from the podium, satisfied. In two words, he has summed up an entire political philosophy. He is the anti-Hamlet. His role is to act.

"We have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people," he says, falling back into his folksy accent. "It is not the government's money. It is the people's money. We're returning the money to the people—help 'em raise their families." His next line needs no folksy accent to go over with the crowd: "We're reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment." If the President's 2,600-word stump speech has earned him a record $2,700 per word over the last twenty-four hours, these are no doubt the most profitable words of the day.

"We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations," he says. The applause-getting line from his last campaign lands with a thud. He squints out at the crowd. Clearly no one out there gives a hoot about dismantling affirmative action anymore. "The days of acute thinking are over," he promises. Or did he say "excuse making"? Waving his hands, he summons forth "new markets for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers." Then he essays a fib so large that not even the friendliest hometown audience can possibly believe him.

"We passed a budget agreement that is helping to maintain spending discipline in Washington, D.C.," he says, bouncing on his heels for extra emphasis. The crowd is silent. Even some of the less acute thinkers in the room are aware that the budget is fundamentally out of whack. The Bush Administration enacted a 6 percent increase in nonmilitary, non-homeland-defense-related government spending in 2002 and an almost 5 percent increase in 2003. By 2008 the country will be another $1.9 trillion in hock, whether we are still in Afghanistan and Iraq or not.

"Our country has had no finer vice president than Dick Cheney," the President says. The applause for the former Halliburton chief is just barely respectable, as many of the people in the audience study their shoes. No one in this room wants to end up like Dick Cheney, an angioplasty man locked away in a bunker somewhere.

"Mother may have a different thought," Bush says, after a pause, completing the punch line to the joke. Relieved, the audience gives the President his biggest laugh of the day.

> "THE DAYS OF ACUTE THINKING ARE OVER," THE PRESIDENT PROMISES. OR DID HE SAY "EXCUSE MAKING"?

"On the continent of Africa, America is now bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men, women, and children now suffering with AIDS," he assures his friends. Shazam! It's happened again, right there on the stage. In a flash, just like Bill Clinton, the man who defeated his father, then balanced the budget, slashed welfare, and used U.S. government jets to fly business executives to China, Bush has used the opening supplied by the anger of his political enemies to morph into the opposite of the man who ran for office, busting the budget, adopting a starry-eyed program of nation-building, and saving African children from AIDS. At moments like this, when the President hits his rhetorical stride, it is interesting to contemplate the conceivable limits on his actions. A moment later the answer becomes apparent. The man can say and do whatever he wants.

"We need to crack down on the frivolous lawsuits that increase the cost of medicine," Bush offers. Pursing his lips, he rails against lawyers "fishing for rich settlements," the kind who "abuse the legal system and [do] nothing to help justice." Putting his hand to his brow, he contemplates a moment of real

no to turn down. "We must be less dependent on foreign sources of energy," he suggests. It's not a bad suggestion. Then again, the Zamboni driver on the skating rink upstairs might lose his job. In the "ownership society" of the future, the President promises, every American will be "empowered" to own his or her own home, health-care plan, and personal-retirement account. What Americans must understand, the President explains, is that we alone are responsible for the decisions that we make in life.

"Absolutely," someone calls out. Encouraged by the response, Bush warms to his theme.

"It is you who is responsible for lovin' your child!

"If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doin' somethin' about it!

"If you're a CEO in America, you have the responsibility to tell the truth to your shareholders and your employees."

The President's voice drops like Elvis Presley's in the talking part of "Love Me Tender."

"In responsibility society, each of us . . ." he says, turning all heavy-lipped and pouty, "responsible for lovin' our neighbor . . . jus' like we'd like to be loved ourselves."

The message is clear: In the new America, there will be no more government sugar tit to suck on—except, of course, for the fortunate few in the audience. A young couple near the Papermasters are making out. The girl—Eurasian-blond, with high cheekbones, bare-shouldered in a black dress with embroidered tulips—is kissing her boyfriend, a bland, bleary-eyed preppy in a white shirt and navy linen suit, as the President praises "the vibrancy of many of the faith-based organizations and neighborhood healers that are changing lives." Although the phrase "neighborhood healers" might be unfamiliar to the well-heeled crowd at the Westin, it will soon become part of the vocabulary of the President's supporters who believe in snake handlers and voodoo charms, as well as with the increasing number of Americans who lack affordable health care.

"All the tests of freedom we can't halt now have come to be tests of our courage," the President says, his head up and chest thrust forward in a pigeon-toed stance, like a runner crossing the finish line.

"Abroad, we seek to lift wherever we can by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift our lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America," the President says. The crucial element of his pitch is the word "we." George Bush and America are a single character, ready for action.

"May God bless America," the President says.

For those not wealthy or powerful enough to merit a photograph with the President upstairs, there is always the rope line after his speech. The art of the rope-line campaign photo op requires the balance of a halfback to make it through the scrum, as well as the participation of a willing accomplice whose shutter-finger reflex is fast enough to capture the grinning donor in the two- or three-second window before the President moves on to shake the next hand. As President Bush walks the rope line, donors hurl themselves forward, grabbing for a golden handshake with the Man. "Stop pushing, stop pushing," someone says. Grinning broadly, his hair plastered across his forehead, an Indian gentleman leans over the rope at a 45-degree angle as a co-worker photographs the President clasping his forearm. "Good work," the Indian man says, as he shakes the President's hand.

Halfway down the rope line, the President whips out his Sharpie. Like everything else that happens at these events, the move has been choreographed in advance by the President's handlers. In the time it takes to pose a single photograph, he can sign three or four items, suitable for framing.

Apart from the hectic scene, those who succeeded are naturally elated. [illegible] his animal magnetism, [illegible] says the secretary from Vinson and Elkins. A younger black man in the crowd is also pleased. "I'm a homebuilder. I'm trying to do a little modeling [illegible] ing on the side," he explains, [illegible] compare our experiences shaking hands with the President. I [illegible] a well-timed squeeze at the end. From [illegible] is a man in peak physical condition. [illegible] handshake, the homebuilder agrees.

A middle-aged ethnic Chinese man named Morgan Lin pops out of the pile; he has brought with him a delegation from Sugarland. "I supported him as governor," he says of the President. "No better man than him."

"Look here," I say, showing him the back of my invitation to the event, on which the President has signed his name with bona fide celebrity flair.

I find Chad Sweet in a quiet corner, away from the bar. "9/11 changed everything," he says. "I was pretty active, but a moderate Democrat. Socially, I felt stronger on the Democratic side. I was pro-choice. Republicans, for the most part, they're fiscally more sound, and national-security-wise, you can't beat the Republican Party." And yet there are things about the Republicans that puzzle him still. "Historically, the Republican Party is the party of Abraham Lincoln," Chad says. "I don't think we need Kevlar-coated bullets or automatic weapons, I'm in favor of safety locks, but people ought to be able to own a gun."

Ideologically, what Chad Sweet has in common with his newfound friends in the Republican Party is that nothing he says makes much sense. But politics isn't about coherence anymore. That the George W. Bush who exercises power today with the support of a clear majority of the American people is so radically different from the candidate who was narrowly rejected by a majority of the American electorate three years ago has a number of obvious causes—the bombing of the World Trade Center, the evil of the radical Muslim fanatics, the belligerence of the President's advisers, the inept diplomacy of Colin Powell, and the President's own obvious skill at the political game. But the bottom line, as always, is us. The pursuit of moderation and humility has never really been the American way, and, as Bush learned in 2000, it makes a poor slogan at election time. Americans are in no mood to stop driving SUVs or to give up skating at the mall in July. Chad Sweet [illegible] cracks out his hand. The banquet room [illegible] is almost empty. It's time to say goodbye.

Upstairs, by the skating rink, local kids in Ecko Unlimited and Phat Farm gear are watching the Zamboni circle the ice. Skating at the Polar Ice concession costs $6 if you bring your own skates, $9 if you don't. The electric bills here must be incredible. I peek into the nearby Abercrombie & Fitch, a riot of gravel-ground authentic vintage camouflage fatigues with jump straps hanging out everywhere. It's military chic, the dreadlocked clerk explains. Beneath the Starbuck's is a music store called FYE, which means "For Your Entertainment." There are racks and racks of CDs by the Byrds, the Butthole Surfers, Da Brat, DJ Screw, Del Tha Funky Homosapien, and hundreds of other artists—a fact worth mentioning only because I'd never heard of FYE before I set foot in the Galleria. I ask Susan, a pretty blonde-haired clerk who is walking the aisles, how many FYE outlets there are in America.

"I couldn't even tell you," she says, her blue eyes glazing over at having to contemplate something so vast. "I can't tell you how many there are in Texas." Behind her is a cutout of a G.I. in combat fatigues standing next to a cutout of George W. Bush. I ask her if she knew that the President was here at the Galleria today. She shakes her head no. I show her the President's signature on the back of my invitation to the $2,000-a-plate event.

She stares curiously at the back of the card.

"What does it say?"

The question catches me off guard. I look more closely at the President's signature. It comes in three distinct parts, I notice—a bold "G," the last half of the letter "W," which looks a bit like a "U," and the last two letters of Bush.

"It says 'Gush,'" I say. "Or 'Guze.'"

"Gus," she says, peering over my shoulder. "It says 'Gus.'"

"You're right," I tell her, examining my presidential souvenir in the unblinking twilight of the Galleria. "It's Gus."

# BRIEFINGS

## *At Issue in the 2004 Election*

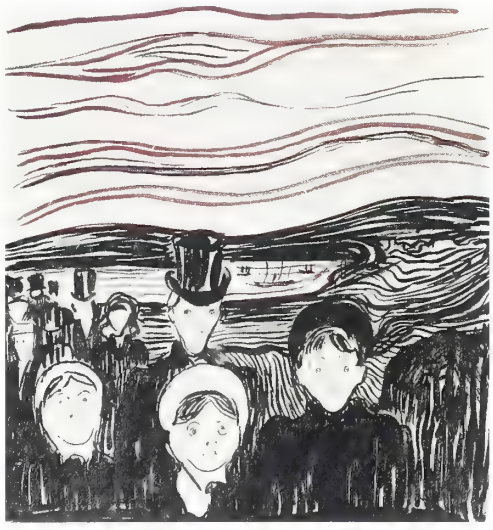
*nce or twice in a century, America comes up against a presidential election that raises e question not merely of personality or of political party but also of our character as a tion. What kind of country do we wish America to become, governed by what set of ppositions, in whose interest, and with what purpose in mind? This year's campaign ints toward such an election, and in the months between now and November,* Har-r's Magazine *will publish a series of brief articles on topics apt to be overlooked by the ajor print and broadcast media but nevertheless likely to suggest answers to the ques-n about our national identity.*

## A RUN ON TERROR

### *The rising cost of fear itself*

Terror, like ecstasy, tends to magnify perceptions. Just as affection becomes adoration n the physical act of love, so too oes vigilance sometimes become norbid obsession in the face of pectacular violence. To be effec-ve, this normal function of sur-ival must also be temporary. It is ow more than two years since our wn national incident of spectac-lar violence, however, and al-hough the United States remains bsessed, it is not unfair, or even in-ensitive, to begin considering the vents of September 11 from a nore detached perspective.

In 2001, terrorists killed 2,978 people in the United States, ncluding the five killed by anthrax. n that same year, according to the Centers for Disease Control, heart lisease killed 700,142 Americans nd cancer 553,768; various accidents claimed 101,537 lives, suicide 30,622, nd homicide, not including the at-acks, another 17,330. As President Bush pointed out in January, no one as been killed by terrorists on Amer-can soil since then. Neither, accord-ng to the FBI, was anyone killed here by terrorists in 2000. In 1999, the number was one. In 1998, it was three. In 1997, zero. Even using 2001 as a baseline, the actuarial tables would suggest that our concern about terror mortality ought to be on the order of our concern about fatal workplace injuries (5,431 deaths) or drowning



(3,247). To recognize this is not to dishonor the loss to the families of those people killed by terrorists, but neither should their anguish eclipse that of the families of children who died in their infancy that year (27,801). Every death has its horrors.

Anti-terrorism nevertheless has become the animating principle of nearly every aspect of American public policy. We have launched two major military engagements in its name. It informs how we fund scientific research, whose steel or textiles we buy, who may enter or leave the country, and how we sort our mail. It has shaped the structure of the Justice Department and the fates of 180,000 government employees now in the service of the Department of Homeland Security. Nearly every presidential speech touches on terrorism, and, according to the White House, we can look forward to spending at least $50 billion per year on "homeland defense" until the end of time.

Is all this necessary? One of the remarkable things about September 11 is that there was no follow-up—no shopping malls were firebombed, no bridges destroyed, no power plants assaulted. This is, no doubt, partly the result of our post-2001 obsession with preventing just such disasters. We must at least consider the possibility, however, that this also represents a lack of wherewithal on the part of would-be terrorists. Although there may be no shortage of those angry enough to commit an act of violence against the United States, few among them possess the training, the financing, or the sheer ambition necessary to execute an operation as elaborate as that of September 11. The nineteen who have already done so are dead, and in the two and a half years that they have enjoyed their martyrdom and their virgins, few have stepped forward to join them. In the United States, none have.

This may be because it is very hard

Anxiety, by Edvard Munch/© Scala/Art Resource/ARS, New York City

possible to manufacture, and—if terrorists did somehow get hold of what little of the virus remains in Russian and U.S. hands—is exceedingly difficult to [illegible]. I suspect that many aspiring terrorists have killed only themselves, with prematurely dispersed sarin or perhaps an all-too-successful anthrax experiment. And contrary to their designation as "weapons of mass destruction," anthrax and sarin, as well as mustard gas, VX, tabun, and a host of other high-tech horrors, are more accurately called simply "weapons." Aum Shinrikyo—which had 65,000 members worldwide, $1.4 billion in assets, and a secret weapons lab run by scientists recruited from Japan's best universities, and spent years underground during which no investigative body knew of them, much less was seeking them—managed to kill sixteen people in a Tokyo subway station. A boy with a machine gun could have done worse.



Real nuclear weapons, of course, are a different matter, but they also are incredibly hard to make. Libya recently gave up on the project. North Korea has been at it since the late sixties and may now have as many as two. As for the much-feared loose Russian nukes, Aum Shinrikyo, with all its money, tried just after the Berlin Wall fell to buy one and failed. This is why Al Qaeda, despite all its well-financed [illegible], used planes. It was the best they could do.

In the unlikely event that a terrorist organization did manage to steal or, more likely, build a nuclear weapon, smuggle it into the United States, and detonate it near a major population center, the predicted casualty rate starts at 10,000 and climbs, in some estimates, to as high as 250,000. This would be a singular crime. But it would be a horror not unlike many that this nation has faced before and many that this nation will face again, terrorists or no terrorists. The country would go on, just as it did after the influenza epidemic of 1918 (600,000 deaths) or during the current AIDS epidemic (500,000 deaths and counting). Attorney General John Ashcroft has called terrorists "those who would destroy America," but a successful nuclear attack would not destroy America. It would not even come close.

In this coming election, as in every other, genuine differences of opinion will inform much of the political debate. A tax cut in a time of recession might make sense to you, or it might not. Perhaps we should build a moon colony instead of funding public schools. Reasonable people may differ. Terror, though, will not be argued on logic or ideology or even self-interest. It will be argued on the basis of emotion. It *is* an emotion.

Moreover, it is a seductive emotion. Our current obsession with terrorism is premised on the fiction of an unlimited downside, which speaks darkly to the American psyche just as did the unlimited upside imagined during the Internet bubble. Indeed, this hysteria can be seen as a mirror image of the bubble, a run on terror. Whereas before we believed without basis that we could all be illimitably wealthy with no work, we now believe without basis that [illegible] will die in incalculable numbers w[illegible] no warning or determinable motiv[illegible] tion. Both views are childish, but t[illegible] Internet bubble at least did not requ[illegible] calling out the National Guard.

Contrary to the administratio[illegible] claims, the War on Terror is not [illegible] challenge as formidable as any ev[illegible] faced by our nation." It is not the C[illegible] War, in which our enemy did in f[illegible] have the ability to destroy the Ear[illegible] Nor is it the Second World W[illegible] (405,399 dead Americans), nor t[illegible] First (116,516). It certainly is not t[illegible] Civil War, still the deadliest conflict [illegible] American history (364,511 dead [illegible] the Union side, and an estimat[illegible] 258,000 dead in the South) and o[illegible] that specifically threatened to end t[illegible] American experiment. It is not ever[illegible] war in the "moral equivalent of wa[illegible] sense of Lyndon Johnson's War o[illegible] Poverty. Fighting it does not make [illegible] a better people. It is much closer [illegible] the War on Drugs—a comic-boo[illegible] name for a fantasy crusade. We c[illegible] no more rid the world of terror than w[illegible] can rid it of alienation. This may sou[illegible] like a splitting of linguistic hairs, b[illegible] we made a similar category error [illegible] Vietnam by calling an invasion a "ci[illegible] il war." That misidentification co[illegible] 58,200 American lives.

As opposed to terror, murder, at t[illegible] hands of Al Qaeda or anyone else, is[illegible] very real threat. But it is not a supren[illegible] threat, and by calling it what it is w[illegible] can recognize that it does not requi[illegible] the wholesale reorganization of th[illegible] American way of life. The preventio[illegible] of murder does not require the suspe[illegible] sion of habeas corpus, nor does it ca[illegible] for the distribution of national ident[illegible] ty cards, nor does it require the finge[illegible] printing of Brazilian tourists. Preven[illegible] ing murder certainly does not requi[illegible] war, which of course is quite murdero[illegible] in and of itself. What preventing mu[illegible] der requires is patient police work.

In New York City we have a pr[illegible] gram called Comstat, in which polic[illegible] carefully track various crime statistic[illegible] detect anomalies, and marshal the[illegible] forces appropriately. It works. The[illegible] were 596 murders here in 2003, dow[illegible] from 2,245 in 1990. This sort of effo[illegible]

Photograph of Confederate soldiers, May 18[illegible] by Timothy H. O'Sullivan © CORB[illegible]

ks election-year grandeur, howev- which may partially explain why e Department of Homeland Securi- does not bother to track the number Americans killed by terrorists. (The ıl tracks terror fatalities within the nited States and the State Depart- ent tracks the same abroad, but each es a different definition of terrorism d neither has domestic numbers be- nd 2001.) Similarly, there is no com- ehensive watch list of likely terror eratives. What we have instead is a phisticated public-relations system, e color-coded "Homeland Security dvisory System," that works to terri- Americans without the grisly work of tual terrorism.

Many desired activities, from shop- ng to watching television, have been ted as examples of what we must do, else "the terrorists will have won." his is debatable. What is not debat- le is that if the American people are rrified the terrorists have won. And, ı this regard, they will have been orking with the full cooperation of ıe current administration.

*—Luke Mitchell*

## CHARITY CASES

***Why has the Bush Administration ailed to stop Saudi funding of errorism?***

On September 20, 2001, nine days after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., President Bush stood before a joint session of Congress and pledged to "starve terrorists of funding." Since then, federal investigators have, in fact, compiled lists of suspected terrorist financiers, raided alleged front groups, and frozen nearly $200 million in assets. But despite those efforts, the United States has made only limited progress in blocking the funding of terrorists. Al Qaeda and other Islamic terrorist groups remain well financed. And one of their major sources of funding, a network of Islamic charities financed by Saudi Arabia, remains relatively uninterrupted. Its tough talk notwithstanding, the Bush Administration has failed to take decisive action against this significant source of terror financing—in part, it seems, to protect the government of Saudi Arabia and its friends in Washington.

The Bush Administration has adopted an approach to Saudi terrorist funding that would best be described as hands-off. For example, last summer it censored the twenty-eight pages on the subject from a congressional report on the September 11 attacks and refused to release the names of Saudi entities suspected to be financiers of terrorism. Even the administration's apparent successes in stemming the flow of Saudi terrorist funding appear far less impressive on closer scrutiny. Since September 2001, the administration has designated hundreds of individuals and organizations, including several Islamic charities, as terrorists or sponsors of terrorism and frozen their assets. Yet Saudi organizations and individuals have emerged relatively unscathed. One of the first Saudi groups designated had already been defunct for years, while one of the group's founders—who himself has been listed by the United States as a sponsor of terrorism—still has assets that remain untouched. And although in January the Treasury Department designated several branches of the Saudi charity al-Haramain, U.S. officials declined to freeze the assets of the group's dozens of other offices worldwide, including its headquarters in Riyadh.

In other cases, the Bush Administration made a conscious decision not to pursue major Saudi conduits for terrorist funding. The clearest example involves two ostensible charities that are long known to have funneled money to Al Qaeda—the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) and the Muslim World League (MWL). Both are financed directly by the Saudi government. MWL is an evangelical organization that was created to help spread Wahhabism, the Saudi brand of Islamic fundamentalism; IIRO is a humanitarian relief organization that operates primarily in Muslim countries. Yet a 1996 CIA report alleged that IIRO helped to fund six militant training camps in Afghanistan, and noted that the former head of the group's Philippines office—Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law—had been linked to plots to "target the pope and U.S. airlines." U.S. intelligence officials also believe that MWL employees were involved in the 1998 bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa. Although both IIRO and MWL were known to have funded Al Qaeda, U.S. government sources indicated to *Newsweek* in October 2001 that the Bush Administration left the two organizations off the list of designated terrorist groups in order to spare the Saudi government from embarrassment.

On top of this, the most promising domestic inquiry into these Saudi groups has been dismantled. In March 2002, as part of a Customs Service investigation known as Operation Green Quest, government investigators raided the Virginia offices of IIRO and MWL, along with a number of other Saudi-backed charities and businesses. Although the raids turned up concrete evidence that elements of the network had funded individuals and groups designated as terrorists by the United States, no assets have been frozen and the few, belated arrests in this case have been made on charges unrelated to terrorist financing. In particular, Abdurahman Alamoudi, who heads a group called the Success Foundation—which in the late 1990s absorbed the U.S. operations of IIRO—has been charged only with accepting money from Libya and with immigration violations, despite evidence, seized from the offices of Success and other groups he controls, of their material support not just for Hamas but for two known Al Qaeda fronts. (Alamoudi was once caught on tape remarking that he disapproved of the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa only because no Americans were killed, and that instead he preferred more "strategic" targets such as the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, which had been bombed in 1994.) Now, under an agreement between Attorney General John Ashcroft and Department of Homeland Security head Tom Ridge signed in May 2003, the Customs Ser-

vice—part of Homeland Security since last March—has relinquished control of its counterterrorism investigations to the FBI, which repeatedly had refused to turn over critical investigative files to Green Quest agents. This deal between Ashcroft and [illegible] shut down Green Quest, quashing the one serious [illegible] domestic terrorist financing.

Part of the Bush Administration's reluctance to confront the Saudis over terrorist financing may have less to do with embarrassing a key ally in the Middle East than with embarrassing the United States itself. Cracking down on IIRO and MWL, for example, would threaten to expose not only Saudi support of terrorism but also America's own role in helping to create what would eventually become part of Al Qaeda's funding network. During the 1980s the United States actively promoted the use of these and other Islamic charities as part of a joint U.S.-Saudi effort to fund the Afghan mujahedeen in their fight against the Soviet Union. The Reagan-Bush Administration, in cooperation with the Saudi government, funneled millions of dollars to the Afghan rebels through these charities to preserve "deniability" of its support for a covert proxy war. When the scheme succeeded and the Soviets withdrew in 1989, the United States simply turned its back, leaving in place the funding apparatus it had helped to create. It also left behind extensive training and logistical facilities, an elaborate network of trans-Islamic organizations, large quantities of military hardware, and, more importantly, a large and experienced army of expert Islamic guerrilla fighters anxious to carry on their struggle. It was at that point, in the midst of the first Bush Administration, that Osama bin Laden began transforming the mujahedeen funding network into a support structure for his newly created anti-Western jihadist organization—Al Qaeda.

Meanwhile, elements of the erstwhile mujahedeen funding network, most notably IIRO and MWL, were expanding their operations and establishing offices worldwide, including in the United States. During the next decade these organizations became prime conduits for Saudi financing of groups, including Al Qaeda, now regarded by the United States as terrorist organizations. Thus the Islamic terrorism financing structure that the Bush Administration now proposes to crush is, in part, an outgrowth of the Reagan-Bush Administration's Cold War effort to undermine the Soviet Union—a classic example of "blowback." For the Bush Administration to designate groups such as IIRO and MWL as terrorist financiers would risk unwelcome questions about the wisdom of having funded and trained an army of Islamic militants. Doing so would also expose the intelligence community to criticism for its failure to adequately monitor these former allies and their extensive funding network.

But the dilemma, for the Bush Administration, extends far beyond issues of history. Many prominent politicians—not least among them the Bushes—have for years maintained close political, business, and personal dealings with the Saudi royal family and, more generally, Saudi interests. The extent of the administration's difficulties on this front became clear shortly after the Green Quest raids in March 2002. Just two weeks after the Customs task force raided the Saudi-backed groups in northern Virginia, two leading Muslim activists with ties to the groups were allowed to meet with Paul O'Neill, then the secretary of the Treasury Department (which, at the time, controlled Customs) to complain about the conduct of the raids. The meeting was arranged by Grover Norquist, the influential Republican activist; Norquist is also the founder and former chair of the Islamic Institute, a conservative Muslim outreach group in which both of the men who met with O'Neill are officers and which has received funding from some of the raided individuals and groups, including Abdurahman Alamoudi.

And the connections do not end there. One of the Muslim activists who met with O'Neill was Talat Othman, a longtime friend and former business associate of President Bush. The two served together on the board of the Texas-based oil company Harken Energy starting in the late 1980s and have remained close ever since. Othman sat on Harken's board as the representative of Abdullah Taha Bakhsh, a Saudi businessman and a close associate of suspected terrorist financier Khalid bin Mahfouz. Bakhsh now heads an oil company that is a subsidiary of Halliburton, the energy giant formerly run by Vice President Dick Cheney.

In addition to his work at the Islamic Institute, Othman serves on the board of Amana Mutual Fund Trust, an Islamic investment group that had close ties to raided entities and yet was not itself targeted. At the time of the Green Quest raids, in March 2002, at least four figures from the targeted groups were affiliated with Amana, including MWL Yaqub Mirza, the individual who set up the U.S. branch of MWL, the fund-raising arm of the U.S. branch of IIRO, and many of the other raided organizations. Despite Mirza's presence on the board, and despite the fact that large sums of money from the suspect groups have moved through Amana, Green Quest agents chose not to raid the firm.

Overall, despite the Bush Administration's public commitment to combat terrorist financing, its progress in shutting down the Saudi sponsors has been limited. By contrast, some in Congress seem inclined to move more aggressively: the Senate Finance Committee, for instance, recently asked the Internal Revenue Service to turn over tax and financial records for at least twenty-five Muslim charities, several of which, including IIRO and MWL, have been under federal scrutiny for possible links to terrorism. Yet the Bush Administration remains timid. The actions it has taken against the Saudis have been largely symbolic and have done little to stem the flow of funds. Meanwhile, responsibility for domestic terrorist-financing investigations is once again in the hands of the FBI, which has so far proven itself ill-prepared for the task.

Some of this may be attributable to reaucratic infighting. The adminis- tion may also be trying, quietly, to d the Saudi government toward itting off terrorist funding on its n; there are, in fact, signs that the udis may belatedly be moving in at direction. But it also seems clear at the administration has made a culated decision to spare a strategic d oil-rich ally, and its friends in ashington, from embarrassment. As e administration is now learning, spite the President's famous asser- n that "you are with us or you are th the terrorists," the distinction is t always so clear-cut.

*—David Armstrong*

## URVEYING THE WRECKAGE

***Why polls of Iraq are likely to tell little***

In August 2003, only months after Saddam Hussein was removed from power, the Gallup Organization sent one of its top polling directors to Iraq to supervise a survey of Baghdad. Gallup's results, billed as the first "scientific" poll of Iraqi opinion, were released in September and immediately attracted considerable attention back home. In public speeches, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Coalition Provisional Authority head L. Paul "Jerry" Bremer, and White House and Pentagon spokesmen all touted various of the survey's findings, especially the news that nearly two thirds of Baghdadis said ousting Saddam Hussein was "worth it" and that a majority of Iraqis favored democratic institutions. Democrats pointed to the poll's gloomier assertions; for example, that the "United States" and "George W. Bush" drew approval ratings in the twenties. The overwhelming impression in the media, however, was of objectively good news for an administration hoping to make a quick, chin-up exit. The coverage was also good news for Gallup and other polling organizations, in its implication that for managing Iraq, polling would provide an essential—indeed, *the* essential—policy tool. "I'm real friendly to this administration," Gallup CEO Jim Clifton told me. "Gallup considers Jerry Bremer a good friend. If we were in his shoes, what you'd really like is a benchmark of how things are going—is there consistent progress? We thought this was the single biggest thing we could do to help. I pledged we'd do it for ten years, on our own money. You can't manage that mess unless you measure it."

When Iraq holds its first elections, the polls by Gallup and other Western organizations will be watched more closely yet. But should we believe them? In the West, people reveal details to pollsters that they wouldn't tell their own spouses; but will Iraqis—preparing to vote for the first time, living under an uncertain occupation, recovering from decades of repression under a government with an extensive network of informants—speak frankly to strangers with clipboards? And even if they do, will the opinions they express bear any resemblance to their choices in a voting booth?



In fact, if history is any guide we should be skeptical of polls from Iraq. It is notoriously difficult to conduct accurate polling in nations recently ruled by autocratic regimes, under which independent political opinions are unwisely formed and even more unwisely offered. Western pollsters were embarrassed on this score in a string of incidents throughout the 1990s, inaccurately calling elections in East Germany in 1990, in Russia in 1993 and 1995, and elsewhere. The most infamous case was in Nicaragua, in February 1990. As the ballots were still being counted, friends of the ruling Sandinistas published a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* to congratulate them on their victory, which had been assured by numerous polls. When the final returns were completed later that day, the Sandinistas had lost, 55 to 41 percent.

Polling in Nicaragua before that election, Howard Schuman, former director of the University of Michigan's Survey Research Center, conducted a now famous experiment. He instructed three groups of employees to take notes with different pens: some of them plain, some with the colors and slogans of the Sandinistas, some with those of the opposition party. Only the interviewers with opposition pens correctly predicted the election results. The plain-pen interviewers got data just as faulty as did the Sandinista-pen interviewers. Schuman has done further experiments to show that the perceived sympathies of the interviewer matter greatly, even in countries where interviewees have much less to fear from strangers. When I asked Schuman what he thought of the polls taken so far in Iraq, he said something that I later heard over and over again from polling experts: "I would trust the polls a little more, but not much more, than someone who had gone and visited and talked with twenty Iraqis."

He included the better outfits such as Gallup, which combed Iraqi census records and satellite imagery to find a random sample of Baghdad, employed seasoned supervisors, did laborious pre-testing of its questionnaires, trained its interviewers thoroughly, visited more than 1,000 Iraqi homes, and obtained high participation rates. Gallup took special pains to avoid interviewer effects, which are especially dangerous in face-to-

Photograph from Baghdad © Bruno Stevens/Cosmos/Aurora

tle telephone service in Iraq). To avoid appearing to be an arm of the United States, it trained Iraqis to do its fieldwork, instructing them not to mention Gallup's involvement but instead to characterize the poll as being conducted by Iraqis, for publication in the Iraqi media.

But the Gallup interviewers did not understand [illegible] important elements of their identities: their gender, ethnicity, religion, sect, and class; that they were being paid by the Pan Arab Research Center in Dubai (an organization that helped Gallup with the poll); and that they were by day employees of the CPA's, formerly Saddam's, Central Statistics Office. Asked about this last fact, Robert Worcester, the chairman of MORI, a top British polling organization, remarked, "Remember the old *New Yorker* cartoon? A Hun is standing at a peasant's door asking, 'Would you say Attila is doing an excellent job, a good job, a fair job, or a poor job?'"

Iraqis had more than their interviewers' loyalties to worry about. Questioning was conducted in the common areas of the Baghdadis' crowded homes, with as many as twenty family members in earshot. Interviewers tried to discourage listeners from jumping in, which apparently they tried to do often, but some pressure, explicit or implicit, seems unavoidable. There is a phenomenon some call the David Duke effect—named for the white supremacist's unpredicted election successes—in which pollees prove reluctant to voice unpopular views unless they are completely alone (say, in a voting booth). Even over the phone, a stranger's voice can intimidate.

One also has to wonder how much sense the questions made to Iraqis, particularly those with little education. Gallup's questions were written in English and then translated, first into classical Arabic in Dubai and then into Baghdadi dialect, at the level of a median adult between illiterate and university-schooled. How much of this did the least-educated respondents understand? We may never know, because interviewers were told not to explain questions, and "don't know" was never presented as an option. Even reasonably well-educated Iraqis may not have understood the questions in the way Gallup had hoped. For example, as the company points out in its post-survey analysis, it cannot be sure whether respondents understood their question "Should Iraqi women have more freedom?" (which Baghdadis turned down five to one) in the intended sense of political and economic freedom, or in terms of personal licentiousness—a potential reading of the Arabic cognate *hurriya*. Moreover, the questionnaire's American authorship introduces the possibility of a subtle bias having affected the wording. From Britain, where antiwar sentiment runs higher, questionnaires such as that written by respected Oxford Research International have found more pessimism among Iraqis. (These polls have also tended, perhaps not coincidentally, to enjoy far less media coverage in America.)

Even if the Iraqis understood the questions and answered them frankly, the deeper issue is whether public-opinion surveys in Iraq today—as in Nicaragua in 1990, or in the Soviet bloc in the early 1990s—are likely to say anything meaningful about how the nation will vote. For example, one of the major topics sure to be followed closely by pollsters in Iraq is the degree to which Islam will be institutionalized in the new government; in polls, more Iraqis than expected have supported the idea of a secular government with guaranteed freedoms for religious minorities, and Bush Administration officials have made sure to draw attention to this fact. But support for such a hypothetical proposition, which in Western democracies might track fairly closely with how people eventually vote, is almost meaningless in Iraq, where the nascent politics is based almost entirely around local and sectarian allegiances. University of Michigan professor Juan Cole, who has written extensively on Iraq's Shiite majority, notes that secular Shiite leaders, insofar as they exist, "don't eve[n] have a political party, they're n[ot] organized at all. They won't end u[p] being properly represented in a par[-] liament. The religious Shiites hav[e] power, they have shown that the[y] can organize crowds. They've bee[n] organizing all along in secret, wait[-] ing for the fall of Saddam." A simi[-] lar argument could be made abou[t] Iraqis' support for democratic insti[-] tutions more generally, or for the ongoing presence of U.S. forces in the country, or any of the othe[r] friendly (or, for that matter, un[-] friendly) findings of the Gallup poll. The point here is not that Iraqis who profess such opinions do not genuinely hold them, but rather that, in nascent democracies with few functioning institutions, a pollster's view of "public opinion" may not coincide at all with politics as it is actually practiced.

Given all the uncertainties of their task, why do Gallup and other Western polling organizations bother to risk their reputations in Iraq? Certainly a large part of it is a hubris about polling itself, which has come so thoroughly to dominate American political life that no one, especially not its paid practitioners, could conceive of an outcome unpredictable by polls. But the dominant motivation seems simply to have been P.R. Despite Gallup CEO Clifton's soldierly talk of doing "what we can do to help," he certainly had Gallup's image in mind, too. As his main pollster in Iraq, Richard Burkholder, told me, "After the war, [Clifton] came up to me and he said, 'We've got to be the first ones in there.'"

—*Jon Lackman*

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*Jon Lackman is a writer in New York.*

# EW BOOKS

*y John Leonard*



n a fable about time travel published in France in 1771, Louis Sebastien Mercier imagined waking after a 672-year nap to find that ves had become heroes; that their nch, Spanish, English, Dutch, and tuguese oppressors had fallen prey iron, poison, and flame"; and that e soil of America avidly drank the od that it had been awaiting for so g." On the pedestal of a statue of the hor of this deliverance—"a negro, head bare, his arm outstretched, h pride in his eyes and a noble and posing demeanor"—were carved



ese words: "To the Avenger of the lew World!"

Thus the militant title of Laurent ubois's sinuous and stirring account f "the largest slave revolt in the hisry of the world, and the only one nat succeeded":

(Harvard, 29.95). Before Simón Bolívar, the Creole aristocrat with a drop or two of "Negro blood" he didn't like to talk about while liberating various Americas from Spain in the 1820s, there was Toussaint Louverture, the "black Spartacus" of Saint Domingue, who took on the French monarchy, the French republic, British redcoats, and, in 1802, Napoleon himself. Somehow, from 1791 on, this French colony in the Caribbean—which consisted of 32,000 whites, 24,000 "free coloreds," and half a million slaves, and exported as much sugar as Jamaica, Cuba, and Brazil combined, plus half the world's coffee—caused unremitting trouble. Imagine actually believing French revolutionary rhetoric. Imagine, when it turned out that the Declaration of the Rights of Man would not be traveling abroad, an island insurrection that destroyed 184 plantations in eight days. Imagine, as planters, colonial clerks, and Jacobins traded horses and vilifications in bloody Paris, a guerrilla "war of Arabs" in the tropics.

"Rid us of these gilded negroes," said Napoleon, meaning black generals like Toussaint and Dessalines, after which he apparently intended to reenslave Saint Domingue, like Guadalupe. Fifty thousand French dead later, he rid himself instead of Louisiana. Which isn't to say that Haiti (the name the indigenous Taino gave the island before the Spaniards killed them off) has had smooth sailing since. Haiti's never had smooth anything, and Dubois suggests why in a series of shrewd explorations of pre-1804 plantation life, the social ambitions of "free coloreds," the terror of field slaves after branding (as if they were livestock) and torture (lopped-off ears, boiling cane juice, live burial), bartering sex for emancipation, syncretic religions like "Vaudoux"—and even, after the insurrectionary wars and the atrocity swappings, Toussaint's very own "militarized" labor policy and "police state."

Like Roman emperors at their worst, like the Latin tinpots Gabriel García Márquez cobbled up in *Autumn of the Patriarch*, everybody behaves as badly as his license allows. And yet: What a moment, this insurrection, and how little till now we have known of its intimacies. No wonder, upon victory, at least one Haitian felt that "in order to draw up our act of independence, we need the skin of a white to serve as a parchment, his skull as an inkwell, his blood for ink, and a bayonet for a pen."

*ortrait of Toussaint Louverture on Horseback* © Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Art Library
*evolt of Negroes at St. Domingue* © Bettmann/CORBIS



in the mirror is Caesar, Charlemagne, Hannibal, and, especially, Alexander the Great. If he is pictured at his worst in Goya's *The Second of May*, Beethoven nevertheless dedicates the *Eroica* to him, and Goethe and Hegel are big fans. And who cares what Talleyrand thinks? According to Napoleon, Talleyrand is "shit in a silk stocking."

In 1798, on his waterway to the Pyramids and Sphinx to find out if, like Alex, he is a god, Napoleon insists on taking with him scientific instruments, printing presses with Arabic and Greek as well as Roman type, so many books there isn't room for the horses he needs, 38,000 soldiers, and 167 scholars. The soldiers suffer his first defeat. The scholars make possible twenty-three volumes of *Description of Egypt*. If, in Egypt, he has diseased prostitutes sewn up in sacks and thrown into the Nile, he also builds a windmill on that Nile. And then he discovers a dark gray stone, weighing three quarters of a ton, with a delicate vein of pink, later to be called Rosetta. The Brits of course steal this stone, but not before the French have copied its inscriptions.

Which brings us to Jean François, every bit as weird as Bonaparte, a little-boy refugee from the Revolution and an illiterate like his sickly mother, smashing bookcase glass to try to reach the alphabet. Until, in the Figeac cathedral, mimes and puppeteers tell the tale of Thais of Egypt—and this strange child

(Norton, $24.95) also tries too hard. As in *Welcome to My Country* (1998), her book on her therapeutic practice with schizophrenics, and in *Lying* (2000), her untrustworthy stab at autoanalysis, she likes to figure herself in every landscape before smudging the sketch with second thoughts or erasing it with a sarcasm. We put up with this performance and its anxiety—too much weather, too many rhapsodic seizures—because more often than not the language she finds is worth the ertion. For instance, she wonder there isn't something to be said memory loss: "For H.M., every sm time he tasted a strawberry, it was first time. Every time he saw snow w is brand new snow falling from t sky. Every time he was touched, it w the first touch . . . come here."

Still, her self-consciousness shado her reportage. She says she wants tell us about B. F. Skinner at Harva and his "operant repertoire," the co ditioned behaviors of his rabbits, ra birds, and pigs. But she ends up puttin her own head in a Skinner box, "whe the smell is of scat, fear, food, feather She revisits Stanley Milgram and h electric-shock obedience experimen at Yale, determined to stick up for th man who explored "the great gap b tween what we think about ourselve and who we frankly are," yet she pretty sure that she herself would b have better on his tests than so ma others did because she knows how th others behaved. With Harry Harlow she inquires again into the preferenc of rhesus macaque monkeys for soft su rogate mother dolls, no matter ho unnourishing, over wire torsos wit steel nipples through which milk flow Such research seems so much friendlie than the strictures of Dr. Spock—an yet Harlow went on to an Iron Maid en and a "rape rack," both of then sadistic, and ended up in electroshoc himself, strapped down like his ani mals, waking up without memory. An who will volunteer to hold him? "'Jus rest,'" says Lauren, "and I try to brin him close, as close as I can."

So, too, with David Rosenhan, we commit our sane selves to mental hos pitals that should know better, in or der to make fun of psychiatry. Or, wit John Darley and Bibb Latané, we con duct experiments that seem to prov that eyewitnesses would rather not ge involved in bad situations, even i someone's life is at stake. Leon Fes tinger and cognitive dissonance, Eliz abeth Loftus and repressed memory Eric Kandel and the biology of sea slug brains—each gets a counterintu itive rereading, a poke in the eye, and an epiphany. There is even a good word here for lobotomies. Look at me, Slater is really saying. Conditioned and obedient, we do. ■

Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia/Bridgeman Art Library

# AM, THEREFORE THINK

## he plight of the body in modern thought

*y Terry Eagleton*

cussed in this essay:

*sh in the Age of Reason*, by Roy Porter. W.W. Norton, 2004. 574 pages. $29.95.

David Blaine, starving himself for forty-four days in a glass box above the Thames last year, is treated to a humiliating les- n in cultural difference. The ew York artist launched his nt with the customary ideo- gical banalities about follow- g the dream, daring to aspire, shing himself beyond the lim- of human endurance, and oldly going where no one had one before. He did not seem vare that the English are not general as impressed by suc- ss and achievement as some of heir transatlantic counterparts, nd have a subversive affection r the underdog rather than he *Ubermensch*. Self-starvation r them has more to do with ick-thin IRA prisoners on unger strike than with smart- ss performers intent on net- ng themselves a few million ollars from the media.

The English response to laine's theatrical self-torture ailed woefully to rise to the igh solemnity of the occasion. Raucous young men bared their uttocks at him, while frisky oung women flashed their reasts. Amateur golfers aimed their hots at the side of his box. Other nembers of the jeering London throng hrew eggs and fish-and-chip wrappers.



Mischievous musicians banged drums to keep him awake at night. Ribald cries greeted one or two furtive hand movements on the great man's part, which a friend tells me were an allusion to masturbation. (Over in Ireland, a morally conscientious nation for which nothing is sacred, a Dubliner climbed into a look-alike box over the river Liffey, grimly announcing his intention to stay there for forty-four hours with no comforts but a sofa, a television set, a cocktail cabinet, and a visiting hairdresser and masseur.)

The London reaction to Blaine was an outbreak of the carnivalesque. It confronted the hubris of the will with the humble facts of the flesh. The crowd found the stunt distastefully self-vaunting and wanted to cut Blaine satirically down to size. If he was set on subjugating the flesh with his unflinching will, some of the spectators used the flesh to signal their derision. Those bared breasts and bottoms were signs that the body was not to be dismissed without a struggle.

The war between flesh and reason, or body and spirit, is the subject of a posthumous book by the English historian Roy Porter, whose own body finally failed him in 2002. Porter was legendary for his wit, verve, encyclopedic erudition, verbal brio, and preternatural prolificness; as his friend and colleague Simon Schama remarks in a foreword to this book, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* is a "shockingly vital and exuberant" work in which the author brandishes his feeling for language "as a succulent, luscious, toothsome thing." A scholar of compelling energy and charm, Porter ran a lively arts program on BBC radio, abandoned a Cambridge fellowship partly because he was fed up with finding himself in cinemas and supermarkets frequented by nobody but dons, and seemed always by some biological miracle to have exactly five days' growth of beard on his chin.

In his 1999 book, *Dependent Rational Animals*, British philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre points out that philosophers always seem to presuppose a physically healthy human being. It is true that we can think more clearly if our hair is not on fire or our fingernails are not being forcibly extracted; like a discreet waiter, the body is at its best when we do not notice it. Most of the time, we are aware of it only when it goes wrong, as we are of carburetors and central-heating systems. But this also means that we forget to think about the body, and so

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Man with His Skin, by Peter Zokosky. Courtesy the artist and Hunsaker/Schlesinger Fine Art, www.zokosky.com

tionality and anim
is together. It
no thing
the
only because it i
nvironment
Wordsworth does if your senses allow you to see only one square millimeter at any given time.

It is the body that lies at the root of what we know as objectivity. This might seem odd, since many philosophers have tended to see objectivity and the body as opposites, not allies. The body for them can only serve to undermine truth, distorting our judgments with its noisy hankerings; its passions and prejudices get in the way of our seeing things as they really are. "A wretchedly foolish and selfish human creature," wrote the eighteenth-century Earl of Shaftesbury, "thinks he has to do with his body. . . . A wiser mortal thinks his body no part of himself."

From Plato to Bertrand Russell, truth and the flesh have been at war with each other. Yet the body is where thought begins, since the body is where we are. And the flesh can be seen as a critique of pure reason, deflating its grandiose ambitions as mischievously as those Londoners bawled cheerful obscenities at the vainglorious David Blaine. Cynicism declares that there isn't anything but meaningless matter; materialism maintains that there is, but that any truth which does not begin from there is likely to come a cropper. This is why, from Socrates to Nietzsche, the sage must seek the counsel of the buffoon, the king go to school with the fool.

If the body is such a fashionable topic at the moment, it is partly because it is nothing if not local and particular, which suits a postmodern age wary of universals and abstractions. Another reason is simply that the body is a more sexy topic than, say, the moral thought of Kant and is thus likely to sell more books in a ferociously competitive market. Twenty or thirty years were unlikely to get your literary study published unless its title
the
the body has gone hand in hand with a curious kind of narcissism, in which the flesh is treated as tenderly and solicitously as if it were made of glass. There are those who would rather put a sword into their body than a sausage. This pathological fear of contamination, which could no doubt be tackled only by zipping yourself into a plastic bag and staying there until you rot, is a form of sickness, however bracingly hygienic it may appear. Its neurosis about the flesh reflects a puritanical hostility to the stuff. In fact, what looks like self-caring may be just as much self-loathing. These days, pummeling the body into shape takes the form of running till you drop rather than lashing yourself with a scourge in a monastic cell. Penitential fasting has given way to punitive dieting. But the urge to self-domination remains the same. The mind—some minds, anyway—cannot stand the flesh and will go to extraordinary lengths to shuck it off. We have not yet taken to imitating one Santorio, a Renaissance Italian sage so obsessed by diet that he used to compare the weight of his excreta with the weight of his food and drink, but some bright spark in California will probably get round to it.

What is scandalous about the body, for civilizations that believe they can master and manipulate everything under their noses, is its sheer givenness. It is not something we get to choose, and thus proves disquieting to those for whom life is all about options. In its frailty and vulnerability, it reminds such societies of what they can least stomach: failure. In its stink of mortality, it insists on the defeat to which we must
come in the end, and which no
unt of square-jawed willpower can avert. In its dependency, the body recalls the unpalatable truth that we are not self-determining, self-sufficient beings but creatures who draw our life and meaning from one another. It unmasks the pernicious Faustian myth that we can do anything as long as we put our mind
it. As Porter puts it in *Flesh in the A*
*of Reason:* "We cannot command
hair not to fall out, tell our kidne
to secrete or our heart to beat."

In all these ways, then, the bo
can act as a kind of political critiqu
It reminds us of the suffering fle
and blood on which our bodile
world is built—of the contradicti
between the ineluctably local, can
nature of men and women and t
oppressively abstract system
which they live. Judging by th
opinion polls in London, a goo
many of those who came to gawk
Blaine would have felt much th
same way about the U.S. adventur
in Iraq, in which a different form d
the unflinching will is seeking to im
pose itself on a messy material reali
ty. Modern military technolog
blows the flesh to bits but remain
insulated by its glass boxes from th
material effects of its actions. It
harder in some ways to strangle
sentry than to destroy a city.

Yet this is not how postmod
ernism sees the matter. By convert
ing the body into sign, discourse, and
culture, postmodern thinkers wish
away its givenness every bit as much
as those whom they find most objec
tionable. These are the arrogan
crew who seek to bend the materia
world, along with a few oil-rich
states, to their own desires. Both par
ties disavow the sheer stubbornnes
of the flesh, the way it tends to rebe
against our best-laid schemes as vig
orously as Iraqi insurgents.

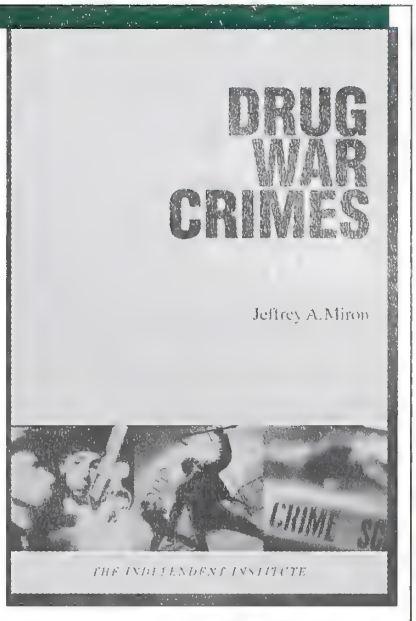
*Flesh in the Age of Reason* is that
rare phenomenon, a book about
the body without postmodern
tendencies. The postmodern body is
usually the erotic one, whereas Porter's
is that rather less voguish object—the
gouty, scurvy, poxy, scrofulous,
constipated, bronchitic one. In the
eighteenth-century Age of Reason,
"visible, tangible flesh was all too often
experienced as ugly, nasty and decay-
ing, bitten by bugs and beset by sores;
it was rank, foul and dysfunctional."
Previous eras had found a microcosm
of cosmic harmony in the supposed
symmetry of the human body, but a
closer scientific acquaintance with Na-
ture made this optimism hard to

in. The microscope, for example, ed to show up embarrassing im- ections in the world. Jonathan t's Gulliver behaves like a micro- e when he is thrown among the gi- ic creatures of Brobdingnag: he just escapes being eaten alive by ssive infant, who is then pacified "monstrous Breast." Later he is ified by the sight of another breast, ncerous one, "swelled to a mon- us Size, full of Holes, in two or e of which I could have easily t, and covered my whole Body."

or the Age of Reason, the body both a source of pleasure and a ough nuisance. It was also a wor- g sign of imperfection in a di- ely created world. Perhaps God's verse was not as well organized as ould have been, rather as come- n Billy Connolly once suggested t the Almighty had made an un- ountable blunder in not placing prostate gland behind the ear. king the British eighteenth centu- as his patch, Porter reminds us h a mixture of horror and hilarity ust what a sickly lot the intellec- l luminaries of the age actually re. Samuel Johnson, blighted by ofula, half-blind in one eye and lf-deaf in one ear, may have tched and gesticulated as convul- ely as he did because of epilepsy, ebral palsy, Tourette's syndrome, St. Vitus's dance. He was certainly licted by clinical depression and rified of death. Ridden with pho- as and grotesque compulsions, the eat lexicographer made clucking ises, obsessively fingered lamp- sts, and muttered violently under s breath. Although he suspected at his ailments had a psychological use, he continued to believe that ul and body were entirely separate fairs. His biographer, James oswell, suffered nineteen bouts of e clap. Despite laying bets on the atter and reminding himself to be elmeted" (equipped with a con- om), he could hardly keep himself e of some form of sexual infection r more than a few months at a me. He also had a sizable drinking oblem, which hastened his death. f it were not for the restraints of ason and religion," Boswell wrote efully, "I am afraid I should be as constant a votary of Bacchus as any man." (In fact, it would have taken a straitjacket to keep this fearfully eccentric Scot off the booze.) The great historian Edward Gibbon was crippled by gout, as well as afflicted with an enlargement of the scrotum that was embarrassingly visible to others. "Have you never observed through my inexpressibles a large prominency circa genitalia?" he inquired with exquisite delicacy of a colleague.

The period had a brusque way with the body, as medics advised thrusting hot pokers up the anuses of corpses to ensure that they were really dead. Fear of being buried alive was rife in an age of shaky medical knowledge: patients who could not safely be declared extinct might have the soles of their feet slashed with razors, or needles inserted under their nails. Some of the dying pleaded for their hearts to be cut out to avoid being buried alive, while others clamored to be embalmed.

Masturbation was considered a serious threat to health, resulting in what one eighteenth-century observer described as "poor creeping tremulous, pale, spindle-shanked wretched creatures who crawl upon the earth." Drinking was a Richard Burton–like affair: it was not unknown for a handful of students to sink around thirty bottles of claret and a dozen bottles of port in a single session. Obesity was a major problem as well. George Cheyne, an eminent physician, blew up to some 450 pounds and needed a servant to walk behind him with a stool on which he could sink from time to time. "England," Porter remarks, "was becoming a nation of fatties." What made it worse were changes of fashion: as the century wore on, an acceptable amplitude (curvaceous bosoms, swollen petticoats, and enormous wigs) gave way to a modish litheness. Trousers grew tighter and dresses clung closer to bodily contours. It was the eighteenth century that invented dieting, deportment, exercise, and hygiene. A violence that it was forbidden to unleash on others could be wreaked instead on oneself. One could turn the drive to dominate Nature back on one's own body. Esoteric arts such as washing your face came into being. By the end of the era, a growing cult of drug dependency helped to hollow the


| US Drug War Index | |
|---|---|
| Annual government expenditure | $33,000,000,000 |
| Americans arrested each year on drug charges | 1,500,000 |
| Americans in prison for drug offenses | 318,000 |

The official claim is that prohibition deters drug use and reduces crime. In ***Drug War Crimes***, Boston University economist Jeffrey Miron conducts a balanced and sophisticated investigation of this claim and of the true costs and consequences of the "War on Drugs." His concise analysis reveals disturbing findings and points to real solutions.

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[illegible] even further. The [illegible] bitters, sedative [illegible] of pure [illegible] Continent [illegible] was [illegible] than [illegible] hopelessly, hilariously low by the body. [illegible] . . . pipes, organs, holes, crevices, [illegible] and, I mean, cans and horn-works."

Sterne sees that the body and the mind are as close as a jacket and its lining, so that if you rumple the one you rumple the other. But he is also fascinated by the mystery of how such different entities can combine. He was, as Porter observes, "uncommonly sensitive to the conundrum of embodiment. In flesh and blood lay the self and its articulations." (Sterne was in fact Irish, and a concern with the body as a way of savagely debunking starry-eyed idealism runs all the way through Anglo-Irish writing, from Jonathan Swift to Samuel Beckett.)

One can think of this enigmatic relation between body and soul, as Sterne himself did, in terms of text and meaning. How do material marks on a sheet of paper, quite meaningless and arbitrary in themselves, actually become meaningful? Does meaning animate these lifeless little black marks rather as the soul animates the body? The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein certainly thought so: If you want an image of the soul, he once remarked, look at the human body. Thomas Aquinas thought much the same: for him, the soul was the inner form of the body, and it was this unity that constituted a person, not some spiritual essence alone. It was a view entirely in line with Judaic tradition. If heaven did not involve our bodies, Aquinas believed, it did not involve us. Christian faith revolves on the resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul. For Aquinas, there was no such thing as a dead body, simply the re-

[illegible] ative pieces of matter, not about spir- [illegible] tunes.

[illegible] what was peculiar about human bodies, as opposed to grand pianos or [illegible] Once reductionists began to insist that there was no real difference at stake here, you could always try to refute them by *adding* an entity (the soul) to the body, thus making it special. This misses the point that the human body differs from a bowl of rice pudding, not because it has some invisible extra but because it is self-determining and self-transformative in a way in which not even the most bubbly bowl of rice pudding can be said to be.

To say that the human body "has" a soul, like a kind of ghostly equivalent to having a pair of kidneys, is a misleading way of trying to describe this creative capacity. It suggests that the human body has something more to it than a tortoise or a slab of toffee does, which is true. But this "more" is not some invisible entity inside it; it is the way that human beings are always somehow in excess of themselves, always in the process of becoming. The soul was supposed to be about the unity of the self; in fact, it is a way of suggesting how we are never quite identical to ourselves. If we were, we would be like toadstools or snuffboxes, whose fate is to be simply themselves.

Threading its way throughout this study is a question that came to preoccupy Roy Porter more and more in his final years: "Who or what am I?" Am I my body, or am I more than it? In one sense, the body would seem to offer a surer principle of personal identity than the mind. I may now sport a beard, but my body is still the body I had when it was clad in [illegible]. And if the mind is no more than its ever changing contents, as many eighteenth-century thinkers believed, how can it be the key to personal identity? In another sense, however, it seems just as odd to say that I am my body as claiming that my body has nothing to do with who I am. The problem is that we both are, and are not, our bodies. We are more th[illegible] them [illegible] but not in the sense of be[illegible] something different from them.

The history of human thought [illegible] among other things, a continual fail[illegible] to hold this paradox steadily in to[illegible] Instead of finding some way of liv[illegible] with this contradiction, we seek [illegible] false ways of resolving it. Alternati[illegible] ly, we ignore one pole of the cont[illegible] diction and attend only to the other. [illegible] Porter shows brilliantly in this book, [illegible] Platonists and idealists who deny th[illegible] the body has anything to do with t[illegible] self are just as mistaken as the redu[illegible] tionists and materialists for whom th[illegible] inert lump of flesh is all we are.

It is surprising, then, that Port[illegible] gives scant attention to the eighteent[illegible] century cult of sentimentalism, whic[illegible] in the work of Adam Smith, Samu[illegible] Richardson, and others, tried to dr[illegible] together body and mind in its very v[illegible] cabulary. We have inherited a set [illegible] terms that are at once moral and phy[illegible] ical: *tender, prickly, callous, warm-hearted, ticklish, bruised, feeling, sensitive, sharp, thick-skinned, full-blooded* and so on. These are mostly words f[illegible] emotional states; and the emotio[illegible] seem to hover somewhere betwe[illegible] the body and the mind, belongi[illegible] wholly to neither but partaking [illegible] both. For this strain of thought, th[illegible] body has its own wisdom, of whic[illegible] the mind may know nothing.

One strength of Porter's study is [illegible] refusal to indulge in the usual borin[illegible] caricatures of Christian attitudes t[illegible] ward the body. "Far from washing i[illegible] hands," Porter writes, "Christian[illegible] ity . . . implicated itself utterly in th[illegible] dilemmas and dramas of the flesh." The book sees just how brutally r[illegible] pressive of the body the churches hav[illegible] been, while resisting the temptatio[illegible] to ascribe all this to those twin boge[illegible] men, St. Paul and St. Augustine. C[illegible] the contrary, Porter appreciates th[illegible] vital distinction in Paul's writing b[illegible] tween "the body," which is good, an[illegible] "the flesh," which is not. By the fles[illegible] Paul means human sinfulness and ego[illegible] ism; but the body is blessed because [illegible] is God's creation. For this disciple, it [illegible] sexual love that is a sacrament, no[illegible] celibacy. Christianity is a fleshly, in[illegible] carnational creed, which believes tha[illegible] God took human form and that we a[illegible] saved by visiting the sick and feedin[illegible]

hungry. Judeo-Christianity was the
movement in history to take or-
ary material existence with absolute
iousness. No Greek or Roman
losopher ever thought of doing that.
Augustine, to whom we owe the use
he word "heart" as the seat of the
otions, was certainly no Hugh
fner when it came to sexual free-
m, but far from holding that the
dy was evil, he actually broke away
m the Manicheans who preached
cisely that.

*Flesh in the Age of Reason*, like sev-
l of its author's studies, treads a
n line between brilliant pedagogi-
clarity and drastic corner-cutting.
its finest, it summarizes one difficult
inker after another in a prose that
ps resplendently from the page.
rter is incapable of being tedious
d esoteric, even on the most tedious
d esoteric of subjects. At its worst,
e book teeters on the brink of being
bluffer's guide, offering us a quick
ur of modernity in all of fifteen
ges, and galloping through intel-
ctual history from Descartes to Lord
ron with a slightly manic air. There
sometimes a distinct sense that the
thor is coruscating on thin ice, as
th his first chapter on human self-
nowledge from the ancient Greeks
William Hogarth.

But just as George Bernard Shaw
isely pointed out that if a job was
orth doing, it was worth doing bad-
, so it is surely better for a reader to
ave an oversimplified grasp of ideas
han no grasp at all. Roy Porter was an
cademic, but he was also that finer
hing to which few academics can lay
laim: an intellectual. The academic
sists on nice distinctions; the in-
llectual breaks down conceptual
arriers. Porter's notion of history is
enerous enough to encompass med-
cine, philosophy, psychology, and
terature, and this study ranges from
iet, fashion, and madness to sex,
rugs, and cosmetics. He has written
gleefully, absurdly ambitious book
bout the question of the relations
etween body and soul, and it is im-
ossible that he is any longer in doubt.
'or either his soul has survived his
ody, in which case he knows; or he
ever had a soul in the first place —in
which case there is nothing left to do
he doubting. ■

# AFTER NATURE

## The varieties of technological experience

### *By Gary Greenberg*

Discussed in this essay:

*Beyond Therapy: Biotechnology and the Pursuit of Happiness*, by the President's Council on Bioethics. ReganBooks, 2003. 328 pages. $14.95.

*Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics*, by Leon R. Kass. Encounter Books, 2002. 313 pages. $26.95.

*Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age*, by Bill McKibben. Henry Holt, 2003. 288 pages. $25.



The Republic was barely a half-century old when Nathaniel Hawthorne introduced his readers to Aylmer, the brilliant alchemist, and his beautiful but imperfect wife, Georgiana, whose "crimson stain" torments the couple in "The Birthmark." Aylmer manages to eliminate the blemish that mars Georgiana's cheek with a potion concocted in his laboratory, but this relentless pursuit of perfection kills his wife. Hawthorne begins his story by recalling how the "recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle," and he proceeds to capture all the fear and ambivalence of a people groping their way through those unexplored landscapes. These were ancient anxieties, no doubt worried at since Prometheus stole fire, but certain questions posed by "The Birthmark" must have held particular resonance for a society newly dedicated to happiness and self-improvement: What happens when the scientist's attempt to wrest from nature its secrets and "make new worlds for himself" is turned back upon the human body? What limits, if any, should we impose on the quest to make ourselves better?

For the first official meeting of the President's Council on Bioethics, in the fall of 2001, Leon Kass, who was appointed by George W. Bush as the Council's chairman, assigned Hawthorne's story as the subject of discussion. The scene is jarring: a cautionary tale about hubris, dense in metaphor and allusion, surfaces in

*Gary Greenberg is a psychotherapist and the author of* The Self on the Shelf: Recovery Books and the Good Life.

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medicine and science interface with the dignity of, the issue of life and the dignity of life and the notion [illegible] you know, that there is a Creator.") Nevertheless, a literary turn is not surprising for Kass, a lapsed physician and a professor at the University of Chicago's Committee on Social Thought. *Beyond Therapy*, the Council's most recent publication, includes references to Aristotle and Plato, Descartes and Montaigne, Shakespeare and Bacon, Huxley and Borges. It also approaches its subject in a way not dissimilar to that of certain environmentalists on the left, for whom the question of technology is one not simply of its effects but of the shape and nature of the technological enterprise itself.

*Beyond Therapy* examines a situation that can arise only in a society with too much time on its hands. Drugs and techniques, such as anabolic steroids and antidepressants, that were developed as therapies for specific diseases have come into use as "enhancement technologies"—means by which to make ourselves, in psychiatrist Peter Kramer's memorable phrase, "better than well." How should we understand our ability to enhance athletic performance? to slow the process of aging? to increase our attention span or lessen our melancholy? to choose the sex of our offspring? Should we welcome these technologies as allies in our pursuit of happiness, or snub them as violations of the work ethic that's supposed to guide the pursuit? Should we take a page from Faust and reject the bargain, or follow Galileo's lead into a world beyond our imagining? A chapter on steroids is replete with piquant questions like these:

> Which biomedical interventions for the [illegible] performance are consistent with . . . our full flourishing as human beings . . . as active, self-aware, self-directed agents? And, conversely, when is the alteration of biological processes [illegible] active experience dehumanizing, compromising the lived humanity of our efforts, and thus making our superior performance in some way false—not simply our own, not fully human? . . . Can our disquiet about pharmacological and genetic enhancement withstand rational scrutiny? More deeply, what does the prospect of such interventions tell us about the nature of human activity and the meaning of human identity?

Kass and company begin their report with the recognition that the ethical questions raised by biotechnologies are fundamentally moral questions—that is, questions about what makes life worth living and why. You can't decide whether it's a good idea to take drugs that will extend the average lifespan by thirty or forty years without trying to figure out what that life is for in the first place.

Once you start looking at bioethical dilemmas this way,* virtually every question raised by new medical technologies becomes difficult. Even a distinction as seemingly simple as the one between therapy and enhancement collapses. It would be comforting if we could simply declare that therapeutic use—such as giving human growth hormone to someone with dwarfism—is acceptable whereas enhancement use—giving human growth hormone to an aspiring basketball player—is not. But, as acknowledged in *Beyond Therapy*,

> most human capacities fall along a . . . "normal distribution" curve, and individuals who find themselves near the lower end of the normal distribution may be considered disadvantaged and therefore unhealthy in comparison with others. But the average may equally regard themselves as disadvantaged with regard to the above average. If one is responding in both cases to perceived disadvantage, on what principle can we call helping someone at the lower end "therapy" and helping someone who is merely average "enhancement"?

This kind of dizzying relativism, which claims that there is nothing in nature that allows us to define with certainty

* *This is decidedly not the way professional bioethicists tend to view these issues. They prefer to stay close to a trinity of concerns—patient autonomy, physician beneficence, and justice—that are procedural guides for resolving ethical dilemmas*

re health stops and illness begins, s the Council to conclude that to- 's enhancement will become to- row's therapy. If, for example, depressants can make even non- ressed people happier, then even- ly ordinary unhappiness will be e a "disease" too.* Which means t if we are going to evaluate the dom of going beyond therapy, we not rely "on the distinction be- en therapy and enhancement to the work of moral judgment. . . . e human meaning and moral as- sment must be tackled directly."

Rather than terrify the reader with sterical polemics about science- ion nightmares, *Beyond Therapy* es its ethical concerns on plausible currently available enhancement hniques. The Council even assumes best about our scientists and in- ntors, that they can relieve the pain traumatic memories or extend our span by several decades without rming us. The book can afford this d of generosity because its authors' ncerns are larger than the physical e effects of experiments gone awry; is the concept of technology itself, d the mode of human existence it as- nes, that interests the Council.

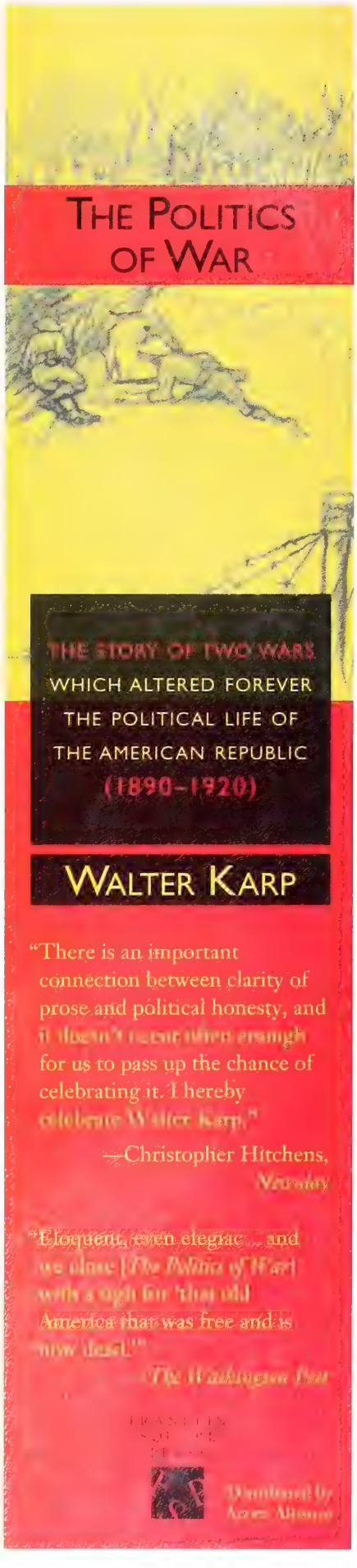
*Beyond Therapy* borrows heavily m Kass's *Life, Liberty and the De- se of Dignity*, in which he notes that chnology is not simply a means to an d but "an entire way of being in the rld, a social phenomenon more than merely material one, characterized the effort, through rational analy- , methodical artfulness and correla- e organization, to order all aspects our world toward efficiency, ease d control." Technology, in other ords, is the culmination of a mind at tries to impose itself on nature, he disposition rationally to order and edict and control everything feasible order to master fortune and spon- neity, violence and wildness, and ave nothing to chance." Before we an fashion our technological devices, e must alienate ourselves from the orld around us and see it as some- ing standing by for our use.

This alienation may originate within us, but the techniques it invents soon colonize our consciousness, shaping our expectations and estranging us further from experiences that are immediate and real. So taken are we by our miracles that we become apprentices to technology's sorcerer. Thus Georgiana's revulsion for her birthmark develops only after her husband has presented her with the possibility of removing it, and Aylmer's disgust is the result "of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind." The body is measured against technology's potential, rather than the other way around. This brand of technological critique, which is shared by not only Hawthorne and Kass but also Heidegger and Ellul, among others, transcends psychology and even ideology, and forces us to confront the greater questions of existence—of being in this world.

But alienating yourself from the ravages of nature can have its rewards, such as polio vaccines, antibiotics, and fewer cavities. If one is not to conclude, with Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski, that "it would be better to dump the whole stinking system and take the consequences," one must find a way of distinguishing good technology from bad—technology that serves our purposes from technology that devises purposes of its own. And this distinction, according to Kass and the authors of *Beyond Therapy*, is where the monstrous implications of bioenhancement lie. Therapy responds to the needs of the body, whereas bioenhancement responds to the aspirations created by therapy: "human nature," warns Kass, "is on the operating table, ready for alteration." And the Council sounds a similar alarm: "In wanting to improve our bodies and our minds using new tools to enhance their performance, we risk making our bodies and minds little different from our tools."

The President's Council on Bioethics is a seventeen-member panel that includes, in addition to scientists and physicians, Francis Fukuyama and Charles Krauthammer, famous chatterers both, who have elsewhere praised the virtues of the free market and criticized government regulation. So it is perhaps sur-

*Even the distinction between unhappiness nd depression is much less certain than psy- iatrists want to admit. "Clinical depres- on" is a list of symptoms subjectively as- yed; there is no recognizable disease entity.*



"entrepreneurs not only resist [illegible] ticipating and stimulating consumer [illegible] where it comes to [illegible] ple indictment of "cosmetic pharmacology," which is the Council's ostensible subject; it seems to be an acknowledgment that the invisible hand alone cannot guide us wisely. And a welcome comment about the consumerism that drives the U.S. economy: when it comes to decrying a marketplace designed to satisfy our open-ended desires and ambitions, why stop at Viagra?

This message, however, is not likely to be heard by the president and his free marketeers, especially since the Council ends up muting its own critique. After delivering a comprehensive diagnosis of what it is about biotechnology that ails us, *Beyond Therapy* ends with the tepid hope that the book "might spark and inform a public debate, so that however the nation proceeds, it will do so with its eyes wide open"—a move rather like Jonathan Edwards ending a sermon by gently suggesting that his congregation go forth and think about it. The Council settles for nibbling gently at the hand that feeds it: rather than follow its argument to a logical conclusion, which would decisively challenge the market mechanism as yet another technology that seeks "to order all aspects of our world toward efficiency" by creating the context in which enhancement technologies arise and make sense, it seemingly absorbs the unfettered market into the natural order and implies that there is nothing to do but cultivate a sense of repugnance—a notoriously vague and unreliable feeling that has trouble distinguishing between homosexuality and homicide.

Indeed, the Council follows Kass's lead from a 1997 *New Republic* article in which he promotes "the wisdom of repugnance" that often accompanies technological innovation as the apprehension of our inherent [illegible] that certain suffering will not be re[illegible] but life—at least according to Kass and the President's Council—is suffering, and there are better, more dignified tragedies to be had than those offered by technology's successes:

> A flourishing human life is not a life lived with an ageless body or an unmuddled soul, but rather a life lived in rhythmed time, mindful of time's limits, appreciative of each season and filled first of all with those intimate human relations that are ours only because we are born, age, replace ourselves, decline, and die—and know it. It is a life of aspiration, made possible by and born of experienced lack, of the disproportion between the transcendent longings of the soul and the limited capacities of our bodies and minds.

The pastoral language in *Beyond Therapy* is meant to evoke a time when we knew where we belonged, when a technologically unmediated life meant that we could be trusted to reject certain challenges to the natural order. Its nostalgic longing also reflects a neoconservative theory of human nature, one that is suspicious of free individuals trying to use extraordinary means to alter their station in life. In *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, Kass complains,

> Older notions of human dignity, formerly the social counterweight to the political doctrine of rights, have been greatly attenuated—partly thanks to the success of liberalism and its alliance with the modern technological project for the mastery of nature. The right to the pursuit of happiness . . . is, as a result, perfectly compatible with utter self-indulgence, mindless hedonism and the factitious gratifications of high-tech amusements and drug-induced euphoria.

The culprit for Kass is not so much the market system that creates the desires as it is "liberalism"—individual freedom run amok. Similarly, the Council declares: "We must live . . . as creatures, and women, accepting our finite limits, cultivating our given gifts." It is a call to stay in line, to accept things as they are, to resign oneself to the natural order and to circumscribe one's freedom accordingly.

Restraint isn't exactly Amer[illegible] specialty. And the prospect [illegible] "a life lived in rhythmed time[illegible] whatever that is, isn't likely to hav[illegible] harried multitaskers burning the [illegible] Prozac prescriptions or eighty-year-o[illegible] celebrating their failures of memory. [illegible] the Council misses its insensitivity [illegible] life as it is lived by so many Amer[illegible] cans, not to mention the irony of th[illegible] message issuing forth from an admin[illegible] istration not given to humble asse[illegible] to rules, this must be seen as a functio[illegible] of the essentially homiletic structur[illegible] of *Beyond Therapy*, which settles in t[illegible] end for platitudes about cultivatin[illegible] "given gifts" and respecting "huma[illegible] dignity." Indeed, it's worrisome to co[illegible] template this hollow rhetoric in th[illegible] mouths of politicians who take th[illegible] term "bully pulpit" so literally and wh[illegible] seem bent on limiting personal free[illegible] doms, such as the decision to contro[illegible] one's own reproductive life.

Yet there is another irony to *Be*[illegible] *yond Therapy*, of which its author[illegible] seem altogether unaware: The idylls o[illegible] harmony and rhythm evoke a tim[illegible] when people returned to the land t[illegible] set themselves free from the depreda[illegible] tions of consumer society, a time tha[illegible] is nearer to ours than the neoconser[illegible] vative preserves of Athens or Eder[illegible] The Council's call to a life "mindful o[illegible] time's limits, appreciative of each sea[illegible] son" could easily have been posted o[illegible] the wall of any sixties commune (or[illegible] for that matter, of Hawthorne's ow[illegible] Brook Farm).

It's a coincidence that the Coun[illegible] cil, at least those members who ar[illegible] sure that everything bad about thi[illegible] country began in 1965, cannot be com[illegible] fortable with, but all they would hav[illegible] to do for confirmation of this peculia[illegible] overlap is read Bill McKibben's mos[illegible] recent book, *Enough: Staying Human i[illegible] an Engineered Age*. In it, he treads [illegible] path remarkably similar to that of th[illegible] President's Council—disconcertingly [illegible] so, when one considers that Mc[illegible] Kibben, whose *End of Nature* was th[illegible] first important book about globa[illegible] warming, is a leading proponent of th[illegible] kind of green politics that are perhaps [illegible] the most vigorous remnant of the six[illegible] ties upheaval.

*Enough* puts forth a modest propos[illegible] al: "We need to do an unlikely thing[illegible] We need to survey the world we now

ıbit and proclaim it good." Mc-
ɔen is no Pangloss; he realizes that
e are problems aplenty with which
ɔntend. But, he maintains, we've
hed a point of diminishing returns
ıew developments, particularly
e in the biotechnology field, which
ns that it is time to say "Enough"—
llow "the rush of technological in-
ation that's marked the last five
dred years [to] finally slow, and
ad out to water the whole delta of
ıan possibility."
McKibben isn't the first person to
ry that the next big innovation
be the end of us all. Like the
sident's Council, he claims that
ause it is directed toward the hu-
ı body, biotechnology—at least
kind that would genetically engi-
r our children and grant us im-
rtality (which are the two major
;aboos in *Enough*)—is a special
e; it brings us to "the moment
en we stand precariously on the
rp ridge between the human past
l the posthuman future." And we
ɔuld, he thinks, back away from
abyss as fast as our unengineered
s will carry us, because the new
technologies will take away the
ited opportunity to make mean-
of our lives that has been left by
hnology's disenchantment of the
ıverse. So, for example, the child
ıetically engineered to be a con-
t pianist would be

ı player piano as much as a human,
doomed to create a particular context for
nerself, ever uncertain whether it is her
skill and devotion . . . that move her fin-
gers so nimbly. . . . She [is robbed] forever
of the chance to make music her own
authentic context—or to choose some-
thing else . . . as the act that brings her
life to life.

his assumption that such a player pi-
o can ever exist, McKibben is being
ıch more sanguine about the
ɔspects for genetic engineering than
en most genetic engineers; his dire
edictions function as straw men, sci-
scenarios that the President's Coun-
prudently avoids. Of course, this
ay simply be a rhetorical device—a
chnology that threatens to take the
ıoice out of human activity cannot
lp but rouse people into action—
ıd, whatever it does, it illustrates the




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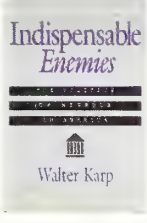


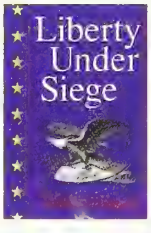

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redemption. When Kristol concurs with Corbin, a new politics is on the way, one that "coalesces . . . around some version of what I've been calling the enough point." And for a political currency galvanized by these dangers, resistance to technology may, finally, not be futile.

It makes sense that these books teach toward Armageddon. They are, after all, works of prophecy—not in the classical sense of prognostication but in the biblical sense of trying to awaken a people to a foundational crisis whose tendency is to blind them to its very presence. These writers understand that if you tug hard enough on one of biotechnology's threads—anti-aging drugs, say, or genetic enhancement—you will soon unravel the whole tapestry of modernity. For nothing else holds it together except the sheer effectiveness of our technological apparatus. Heidegger described this as "exactly what is so uncanny" about technology: "that everything is functioning and that the functioning drives us more and more to ever further functioning, and that technology tears men away from the earth and uproots them." Once men start to really tug hard enough to drive your car to the store for a loaf of bread, allow yourself to think about the web of practices, the wars and economic injustices and environmental despoliation, into which this simple act is woven, and you will feel that uprootedness, that sense of alienation. It's enough to make one wish there

Although these turns toward piety seem to ignore the disasters that the faithful regularly perpetrate, it may not be a mistake to see technology in quasi-theological terms. After all, what happens when the individual declares himself an autonomous moral agent, and with that stroke wipes away any overarching sense of the Good capable of holding together our approbations and condemnations? If there's no God to please, no Hell to fear or Heaven to aspire toward, then why, aside from purely pragmatic concerns, ought anyone to do (or not do) anything in particular? If there's no master plan for humanity, and if we have the means at our disposal to do so, then why not take matters into our own hands and retrigger the thing—by, say, stopping the ravages of old age and mortality or taking drugs to ward off existential anxiety?

In a sense, then, there is nothing really new in biotechnology. We've been on the operating table since the invention of the wheel, taking matters into our own hands and remaking creation, including ourselves. Technology, with its mediation of experience, is what we are born into and trying to find a way out of it. Kass and McKibben want to do, is as formidable a task as ridding George of her birthmark. If these writers lapse into sentimentality and nostalgia, they may be only because, similar to the rest of us, they don't have a way of imagining what technology under human control, technology that does not leave its imprint on human nature, actually looks like.

## March Index Sources

**1,2** U.S. Census Bureau (Washington); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/General Accounting Office (Washington), **4,5** Committee for Community Change (Washington); **6** City and County of San Francisco; **7** Federal Election Commission (Washington) **8** *Congressional Record*, Vol. 112; **9** Coalition Provisional Authority (Baghdad), **10,11** ABC News (New York) *Washington Post* poll; **12** U.S. Army (Washington); **13** United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo); **14,15** Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (Jerusalem); **16** Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (Singapore); **17** Nuclear Policy Research Institute (Washington); **18** U.S. Department of Energy, **19** NASA (Washington), **20** Adrian Lee, University of California (Berkeley); **21** Atsumu Ohmura, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Zurich), **22,23** Professor Eckard Wimmer, State University of New York (Stony Brook); **24** Futures Group International (Washington); **25** amfAR (N.Y.C.); **26** U.S. Department of Agriculture/National Cattlemen's Beef Association (Centennial, Colo.)/*Harper's* research, **27** National Cattlemen's Beef Association/The European Commission (Brussels); **28** Dr. Meirion Evans, University of Wales College of Medicine (Cardiff), **29** *Il Sole 24 ORE* (Milan); **30,31** U.S. Department of Justice; **32** U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of the Inspector General (Washington); **33,34** The R2K Legal Collective (Philadelphia); **35** Stephen B. Bright (Atlanta); **36** AFL-CIO (Washington); **37** Bureau of Land Management, National Wild Horse and Burro Program (Washington); **38** Tourism Authority of Thailand (Bangkok); **39** San Diego Zoo (Calif.).

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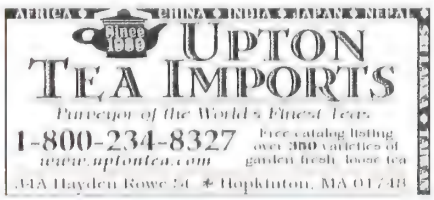
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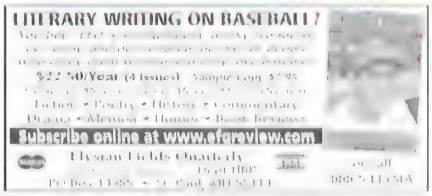
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# LETTERS

*Continued from page 6*

lawsuits. An offer to settle is not an admission of guilt.

*Gregory N. Austin*
Farmington Hills, Mich.

## Beltway Blues

Wayne Biddle is correct to criticize the Bush Administration for "running up the largest tab in history" and for its reckless deficit financing, but it is odd for him to launch his Letter from Washington ["The World's Biggest Tab," January] with a reference to Washington, D.C.'s, crumbling schools, as insufficient funding is even a secondary cause of the poor effect there. At present, D.C. spends $10,000 per student, 50 percent more than the national average.

*D. Eric Schansberg*
New Albany, Ind.

## All Is Done and Said

It seems disingenuous of *Harper's Magazine* not to have noted—apropos of Denis Donoghue's review of R. F. Foster's *W. B. Yeats: A Life II. The Arch-Poet* ["What Was Lost," Reviews, December 2003]—the significant fact that Donoghue himself was among a rather long line of biographical predecessors chosen by Yeats's children to write the biography before the final decision on Foster.

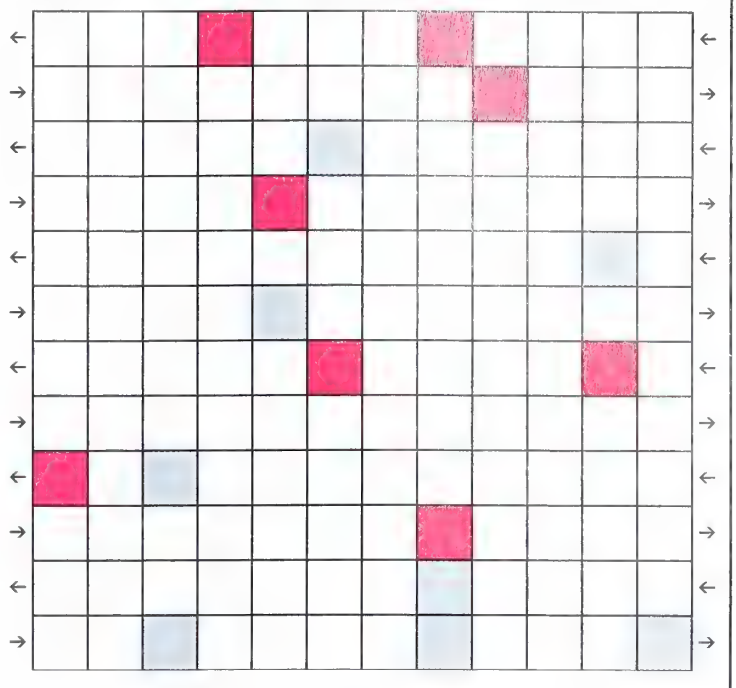
*U. S. Dhuga*
New York City

*Denis Donoghue responds:*

It was not a "rather long line." I was contracted by Oxford University Press to write the biography. After about a year, I opted out and returned the contract. Nearly one year later, Oxford contracted F.S.L. Lyons, the distinguished Irish historian, to write the book. When he died, the press turned to R. F. Foster, who did the job in two volumes and seventeen years. No mystery there, nothing "disingenuous."

# Chutes and Ladders

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*



**The winner is: Dick __ Jane __**

Dick and Jane are playing a game of Crossword Chutes and Ladders. The answers to the clues for each player form a word chain, the last letter of each answer being the first letter of the next. Each chain is to be entered in the diagram beginning in the square in the lower left hand corner and proceeding across the bottom row left to right, up to the next row right to left, and so on in a continuous chain ending (for the winner) in the top left square. (Directional arrows are provided for each row.) However, whenever a word ends in a colored square, the player has hit a chute (red) or a ladder (blue), which means that the next answer must be entered up (for a ladder) or down (for a chute). Chutes and ladders may go either straight up or down, or on either the right or the left diagonal (to be determined by the solver.) At the end of the word (the bottom of the chute or the top of the ladder), the next answer must continue the back and forth pattern toward the top, either getting a big jump forward or a disastrous setback. Solvers must determine which player wins the game.

Answers are all common words, with the exception of Jane's clue (o.), and include two proper names. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 73.

DICK'S CLUES

A. A Spanish poisoner . . . (3)
B. . . . for each time forward (4)
C. Result of contract tender eviscerated by referees (6)
D. Wrap necessarily includes it (4)
E. One squeal, excellent in a pet (5)
F. Steamier after flying around, lands in the Mideast (8)
G. Appliance for man or boy (6)
H. Music that's jazzy, like music from a foreign country (5)
I. Bring into distress processed nitrates (8)
J. Heckler in a sewer? (7)
K. Actual head of Mafia's area of control (5)
L. Mean people can be remiss (6)
M. Rationales for renovation of a house (10)
N. The safe side, in general (3)
O. Drawn out quote printed in the Spanish passport (8)
P. Seeing what studying tree rings accomplishes (6)
Q. Effrontery! Indians displaying rooms (9)
R. Band remains after singer starts (4)
S. Losing $100 check is hell, to put it mildly (4)
T. Mark changed a lot in the east (5)
U. Immature male's is unfocused (7)
V. You can make short work of souse (3)
W. Type in a tropical setting (4)

JANE'S CLUES

a. Was pronouncedly un-Cockney, like Depp recently (and initially) (9)
b. Delights in store? Quite the opposite! (4)
c. Chilly collection of drips: one hundred to one hundred fifty English (6)
d. Masseur massaged theologian (7)
e. Worker waves from audience (4)
f. Cable cars in San Francisco retroactively ruin UCLA shot (10)
g. Pull a few strings, making [illegible] (5)
h. Whirlpool converted [illegible]
i. Lame musical? Sour[illegible]
j. Doctor trimmed [illegible]
k. She inspire[illegible] o last (4)
l. Necessitat[illegible] lation (6)
m. Allow[illegible] fter part of trip (5)
n. Rule[illegible]
o. Crappie sw[illegible] nd fruit skin (7)
p. Hip or out-of-it, bachelor gets it in bar (8)
q. State what AAA often does in the lower digits (4)
r. Stock for outbreak of rashes (6)
s. Vegetable covering (rind) half removed—that's rather conservative (8)
t. Hold underneath a vessel harbors it (4)
u. English clergyman, set for youngsters (7)
v. Cut [illegible] once, unfortunate error ceded (10)
w. Pass on *The Matrix* (3)
x. Sound out S.A.'s theses (6)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Chutes and Ladders," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by March 12. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the April issue. Winners of the January puzzle, "Strip Mining," are John Bower[illegible] and Heather Mundy, Oakland, California; and Joe Sampson, Richmond, Virginia.



# FINDINGS

S[illegible] pig and human genes. The hybrid [illegible] dogenous retrovirus (or PERV), suggesting that xenotransplantation, the ultimate goal of such research, could lead to animal viruses jumping the species barrier to humans. Researchers in California accidentally created a "hyper-virulent" strain of tuberculosis when they disabled some genes in an attempt to make the bacterium less deadly. An envelope filled with 100-year-old smallpox vaccination scabs turned up in New Mexico. British health officials reported the first possible transmission of mad cow disease to a human via blood transfusion, and family members of people who have recently died of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in the United States were wondering whether mad-cow-infected beef was to blame. A new study found that hormones that leak out of cattle feedlots have been changing the sex of wild fish. British sperm counts were down 29 percent. A Colorado woman was jailed for falsely claiming that her son is a genius, and a frat boy at the University of Georgia killed and ate a [illegible]

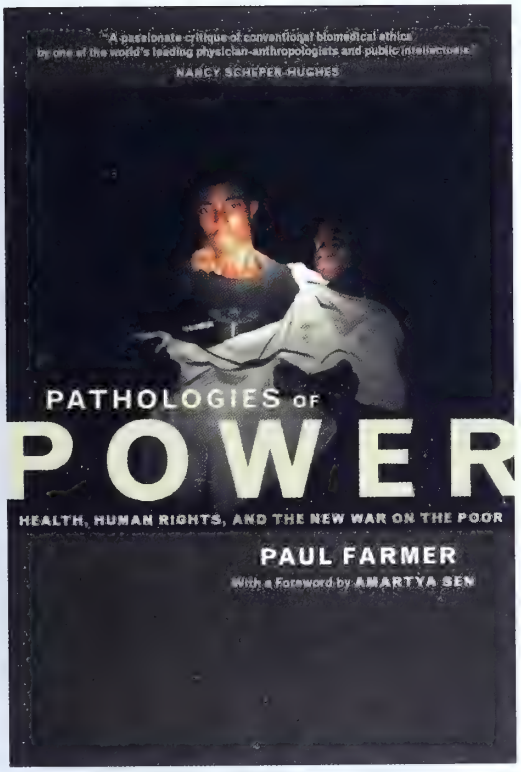
American scientists at the Institute for Biological Energy Alternatives created an artificial bacteria-eating virus in fourteen days using synthetic genes; the secretary of energy suggested that such synthetic microbes might someday remove carbon dioxide from the [illegible] researchers in California found that [illegible] mosquito that spreads the West Nile virus has developed resistance to common pesticides. An experimental vaccine for the Ebola virus was bei[illegible] Maryland, and GlaxoSmithKline's head of gen[illegible] mitted that most studies don't really work in mos[illegible] One in seven American schoolchildren were foun[illegible] at risk of heart disease. Neuroscientists determined that motherhood makes female rats smarter, calmer, and more courageous. It was discovered that cinnamon is good for your blood, and that people who study science in school tend to live longer. A recent genomic survey of human feces found traces of 1,200 viruses, about half of which were unknown to science. Australian doctors warned people not to eat slugs.

A new theory was advanced that global warming began 8,000 years ago when farmers began clearing forests for agriculture and grazing large herds of livestock, which led to higher carbon dioxide and methane levels; by A.D. 1700, human activity had raised the global temperature by .8 degrees Celcius, an increase roughly equal to that caused by industrial activity since then. Spanish and American scientists were searching the sky for signs of megacryometeors, huge chunks of ice, weighing up to 440 pounds, that form in the upper atmosphere and fall to earth, possibly as a result of global warming. It was discovered that soot has twice the greenhouse effect of carbon dioxide. An American company called Dyn-o-Mat claimed to have invented a powder that removes clouds from the sky. Up to half the plant and animal species on land could face extinction because of global warming by 2050, scientists said, and hundreds of ski resorts are expected to go out of business. Physicists at Harvard University succeeded in "freezing" a beam of light without losing its photons. The Earth's magnetic field has been fading for some time, scientists said, and might collapse altogether. Physicists speculated that tiny exploding black holes are raining down on the Earth. New studies found that magnets do not ease foot pain, that animals [illegible] ear new things die young, and that stress can make [illegible] ze longer. The National Weather Service posted [illegible] ent advisory to its website saying that "the Earth has left its orbit and is hurtling towards the sun." ■

*[illegible] Breaks [illegible] a series of digital [illegible] [illegible] stman, documenting his performance at the Los [illegible] County Museum of [illegible] a floor sculpture by Carl Andre [illegible] the Fifth [illegible] Stands Ominously Still [illegible] at Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City*

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FOUNDED IN 1850 / VOL. 308, NO. 1847
APRIL 2004



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Printed in the U.S. Periodicals postage paid at New York, New York, and additional mailing offices. In Canada, second-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. In Canada, International Publications Mail Agreement #40013802. Canadian GST 12477 4167 RT. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Harper's Magazine, P.O. Box 885, Markham Station Main, Markham Ontario L3P8M9. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to *Harper's*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. ISSN0017-789X. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please provide both address from last issue and new address. Allow two weeks advance notice. SUBSCRIPTIONS: $21 one year. Canada and United States possessions, add $2, other foreign, add $20 per year. Send orders to *Harper's Magazine*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. **SUBSCRIPTION PROBLEMS: Write Harper's Magazine, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511, or call (800) 444-4653, M–F, 8 A.M.–midnight, S–S, 9 A.M.–7 P.M., EST.** All requests for PERMISSIONS and REPRINTS must be made in writing to *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, New York 10012. The Readings in *Harper's Magazine* every month consist of texts and documents found in the public domain, most of them abridged for reasons of space and not all of them reprinted with permission. *Harper's Magazine* will not consider or return unsolicited nonfiction manuscripts that have not been preceded by a written query, but will consider unsolicited fiction. Unsolicited poetry will not be considered or returned. No queries or manuscripts will be considered unless they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Visit our website at http://www.harpers.org

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# LETTERS

## The Land of Elk and Honey?

Richard Manning ["The Oil We Eat," Essay, February] suggests a return to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle as a panacea to the dominant industrial system of food production, but a widespread adoption of his "one elk a year" solution would be worse, in terms of human suffering and environmental havoc, than agriculture's present ailments.

Few of the world's hungry populations have access to herds of wild game, and those who do typically eliminate them rapidly. This slaughter of "bush meat" is a major factor in the endangerment and extinction of wildlife both inside and outside protected reserves throughout the world.

Hope lies with small farmers currently capitalizing on their natural advantages by intensifying inputs of human labor, diversifying and rotating crops, and integrating livestock, which have consistently led to yield increases of 50 to 100 percent. By channeling small farms' higher productivity into feeding their occupants, with only surpluses sold at market, poor populations gain food security. And since less-developed countries' populations dwell predominantly in rural areas, there is widespread agreement among economists that this emphasis on domestic agriculture is a vital step toward sustained economic development.

*Wylie Harris*
Saint Jo, Tex.

According to Richard Manning, "vegetarians claim their habits are kinder to animals, though it is difficult to see how wiping out 99 percent of wildlife's habitat, as farming has done in Iowa, is a kindness."

In the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, thousands of football-field-long buildings containing thousands of chickens occupy the land where wildlife once thrived. Millions of soybean bushels are produced in this region just to feed these chickens, supplementing their dumping-ground diet of feather meal and cattle brains. Cancer rates among poultry workers are abnormally high, and chicken diseases are rampant.

Yet Manning implies that turning soybeans into tofu burgers for vegetarians is little more than a dreamer's idea of making the earth a better place compared with the "heft" of shooting an elk. This descent into personal violence weakens his otherwise credible argument.

*Karen Davis*
United Poultry Concerns, Inc.
Machipongo, Va.

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is bizarre for Richard Manning
ıdict vegetarians for the decima-
of wildlife habitat in Iowa and
potato farmers' practice of gut-
ɔting deer in Michigan. Potato
ıers in Michigan are more than
ly "meat and potatoes" men rais-
crops to sell primarily to other
at and potatoes" men. No vege-
an I have ever met would con-
e gut-shooting.

Ve all have to eat, and farming
s consume wildlife habitat, but
a hardly exemplifies a vegetarian
nomy of land usage, which has
ver been attempted on such a
ge scale.

*chael Allen Fox*
ıgston, Ontario

Just as there is no such thing as
an money, clean protein does not
ist for anyone living in an ad-
nced industrial society. Where did
chard Manning's bullet come
ɔm, or the rifle that allows him to
pt out of an insane system"? How
out the food eaten by those who
ade and distributed his equipment?

Our society's interconnected na-
re and economy make any simple
lculation of individual consump-
ɔn or culpability absurd. Equally
ecious is the idea that—even if we
sume that Manning's neo-hunter-
atherer ideal provides some kind of
hical path out of the system—we
an feed the citizens of the United
tates using his methods. Killing
ɔnight's dinner is not an option for
ɔlks in the Bronx.

*ien Burck*
'ortland, Maine

"The Oil We Eat" elegantly estab-
ishes the thermodynamic limits of
olar productivity and highlights the
isks of concentrating it in grain and
ivestock. But man's impact on this
ystem is more detrimental than
Manning conveys.

Less than two kilograms of photons
ɔer second are available to fuel this
complex web of life, only a small frac-
tion of which is captured by photo-
synthesis. Even today, we use less
than 0.02 percent of this energy to
fuel our wasteful ways, but, as Man-
ning notes, we draw most of it from
our inheritance (fossilized life) in-
stead of from the vast amount of en-
ergy manifested as sunlight, wind, and
water movement. That we have so
much solar energy available but con-
tinue to expeditiously trash the plan-
et bodes ill for our continued survival.

*Tony Tweedale*
Missoula, Mont.

In *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology*, Barry Commoner writes that, biologically speaking, humans participate in the environmental system as subsidiary parts of the whole. Yet human society has been structured to exploit that very environment to produce wealth.

Appreciation of this paradox is vital to overcoming the serious threats confronting the environment today. We should be mindful of Commoner's "first law of ecology"—that everything is connected to everything else—but rather than look


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"Sweetly macabre, adroitly surprising."
—Gregory Maguire, author of *Wicked*

animal crackers *Stories*
by hannah tinti
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back at the history of agriculture as a great and brutal catastrophe, we should regard it as a life-sustaining gift of nature and human ingenuity that must be respected and protected from abuse.

*Dale Wichoff*
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Minneapolis

I would add one point to Richard Manning's excellent essay. The rapid spread of "European farming" across the New World's grasslands spawned another dreadful hunger—for slaves to provide labor—the consequences of which have been as poisonous in the social sense as all those tons of nitrogen have been in the biological.

*D. Steven Mundy*
Vancouver, British Columbia

Agriculture's dependence on oil cannot be overemphasized. Each year as energy costs increase, my ability to produce corn here in Kansas decreases. Maybe the answer to these farming woes lies in U.S. cities, which are sheltered, irrigated, and could be fertilized with their own waste. If I lived in those parts, I'd plant nut and apple trees, and I suspect that all the chickens in the world could be fed on the garbage of New York City.

*Bruce Ban*
Schoenchen, Kans.

## *Frontière* Justice

It is instructive that the trial of Slobodan Milosevic is taking place while George W. Bush, Ariel Sharon, and Henry Kissinger are still at large, and that the Bush Administration, after the capture of Saddam Hussein, has vehemently resisted the authority of the International Criminal Court ["War Crime and Punishment," Folio, January]. Furthermore, virtually the entire Bush Administration was recently charged with war crimes under Belgium's "universal competence law," a law that was disgracefully repealed when Donald Rumsfeld threatened to move NATO headquarters out of Brussels. Needless to say, Milosevic does not have this kind of leverage.

It is reasonable to suspect that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is "so American" that it cannot properly claim the mantle of international legitimacy. But even if Milosevic is guilty, he must be permitted, fully and publicly, to air his defense that the crimes he has been charged with can be attributed to the United States', Germany's, and NATO's "humanitarian intervention" in the Balkans. If this defense, or any part of it, is suppressed, future war-crimes prosecutions will be of dubious value.

*Chris Ronk*
New York City

Guy Lesser writes that "the only predecessors of the Tribunal had been the Nuremberg proceedings." This is incorrect. As Princeton University associate professor Gary Bass points out in *Stay the Hand of Vengeance: The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals*, the Constantinople war-crimes tribunals of the Turks responsible for the 1915 Armenian genocide were a predecessor of the Nuremberg trials.

*Jason Sohigian*
Watertown, Mass.

## Read All About It

It is unfair of Rich Cohen ["'It's Not News,'" Letter from Winnetka, February] to imply that chilling restraints placed on New Trier High School student journalists typify a dismal state of instruction across the country. Although it is true that the Supreme Court's 1988 *Hazelwood School District* v. *Kuhlmeier* decision has emboldened school officials to undermine the student press by restraining publication of content deemed "inappropriate," journalism teachers throughout the United States have been at the forefront of encouraging responsible and probing reporting.

Here in Colorado lawmakers have sought to counteract *Hazelwood*'s damage by delineating public-school journalists' rights and by prohibiting administrative prior restraint.

When Cohen faults the shortcomings of today's professional press, he implicates teachers of high school journalism for encouraging timid, status quo reporting. But if he were to survey a wide array of student publications, he would find a different story.

Last fall, for example, the student editors of the *Orange and Black* in Grand Junction, Colorado, published a debate about proposed mandatory recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. The photo accompanying the piece displayed a student saluting the flag Nazi-style. That got people talking all over the state, as good journalism should.

*Daniel Blegen*
Brighton, Colo.

Rich Cohen's experience as a journalism student at New Trier High School differed significantly from my own as editor in chief of the *New Trier News* in 1957 and 1958.

Far from tutoring us to become school boosters, Robert Boyle encouraged us to pry under rocks and range far afield in our quest for the news. He backed us fearlessly when we came into conflict with the school administration and the student council, which attempted unsuccessfully to sever our funding unless we donned rose-colored glasses and toed their "company" line.

Our *New Trier News* editorial theme that year was "Individualism the Mark of Education," which was an apt mantra for myself and my fellow staff members. To this day we all remain friends and admirers of Robert Boyle.

*Lee Quarnstrom*
La Habra, Calif.

## Politically Incorrect?

Lewis Lapham's "Revised Text" [Notebook, January] presents a peculiar analogy between a practice of "speaking in euphemism" he claims was "conceived in the universities in the early 1980s" and the double-speak perpetrated by the Bush Administration.

Lapham fails to recognize that the linguistic demands made by "women, gays, blacks, Latinos, environmental

st any and all victims of circumst ce," are aimed at promoting an aw reness of language's political effe s; the administration's euphe misms are intended to prevent such probing analysis, or any analysis at ll.

E Epp
S Diego

## T e Age of Treason

n the process of praising Raymnd Aron's "clear-headed, responsi e political decisions" and "cool h torical analysis" ["Stands to Reason," Reviews, December 2003], rk Lilla ridicules Sartre's engaged i ellectual position and suggests t t the affairs of the state be handled by those who "actually have to e ercise power and make decisions." In a democratic society, all citiz ns, including artists and writers, ve a right to be active in political l e. Sartre should not be criticized f taking a moral stance against estern colonialism but for failing extend the same high standards to e Socialist bloc and liberation ovements he did support.

I wonder how Lilla would regard n intellectual who analyzed the azi occupation of France or the olocaust with the same cool detched eye he so admires in Aron's ritings about Algeria.

sghar Massombagi
ancouver, British Columbia

## Vinging It

The parrot described so vibrantly y Nadine Gordimer ["History," Story, February] was not a member of a pecies native to Africa, famous for s glib gray parrots with flame-red or inot-noir tail feathers. A parrot hose "plumage is green and yellow, vith a touch of red somewhere" is nost likely an *Amazona ochrocephala oratrix* — a Double Yellow-Headed Amazon—whose wild habitat centers in Mexico and once ranged to northern California.

Melody Ward Leslie
Eugene, Oreg.


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# NOTEBOOK

## The fog of self

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*vanity does not entirely overthrow the rtues, at least it makes them all totter.*
—La Rochefoucauld

The NBC program *Meet the Press* evoted its broadcast on February 8 o an hour-long interview with Presdent George W. Bush, and well beore Tim Russert interrupted the roceedings for the first commercial reak, it was apparent that the White House publicists had been orced to desperate measures. The 'resident was rapidly losing altitude n the opinion polls, no weapons of nass destruction had been found nywhere east of Suez, and the news nedia were uncharacteristically loud n their suspicion that our armies had gone off to war under false preenses, that Saddam Hussein never had confronted the United States with a clear or present danger, that the threat had been fabricated (if not by the intelligence agencies then by the visionary ideologues at the Pentagon), and that 3,588 American soldiers were dead or wounded in Iraq not for God, for country, and for Yale, but for reasons yet to be announced.

Compound the bad news from abroad with the increasingly obvious bias of the government's economic policies at home (money for the rich, unemployment for the poor, the federal debt rising to $521 billion in 2004), and the omens didn't favor the President's chance of reelection in November. How then to refurbish the illusion of the President's integrity? In the absence of a better option (posing their man on the deck of another aircraft carrier or sending him back to Baghdad to distribute Easter eggs) the Oval Office stage crew elected to prop him up in front of a network camera without a flight suit or a script. The mistake was evident in the first five minutes of the broadcast. Disappointing his admirers among the friends of Jesus and ExxonMobil, the President took it into his head to play at being clever—alert to the tricks of his adversaries in Congress and the liberal press ("It's tough here in Washington"), well satisfied with his persona as the lionhearted defender of women and children and Western civilization ("This is a dangerous world, I wish it wasn't"), smug in the assumption that with his lifetime guarantee of schoolboy charm he had proved himself a match not only for a world-class "madman" but also for the host of demonic assassins concealed in the labyrinth of "shadowy terrorist networks."

The interview was an embarrassment. The President isn't good with words, and he seldom knows how or why or when he's lying. Not having a straight story to tell, and unwilling to hold himself accountable to anything other than his own courage and resolve, he answered Russert's questions with statements deployed as evasive decoys similar to the chaff off-loaded by an F-16 dodging enemy ground fire.

"So, we need a good intelligence system. We need really good intelligence."

"I make decisions here in the Oval Office in foreign policy matters with war on my mind."

"And the American people need to know they got a president who sees the world the way it is."

"Saddam Hussein was dangerous with weapons. Saddam Hussein was dangerous with the ability to make weapons. He was a dangerous man in the dangerous part of the world."

"When the United States says there will be serious consequences, and if there isn't serious consequences, it creates adverse consequences."

"This economy has been through a lot, which is why I'm so optimistic about the future because I know what we have been through.... I think this economy is coming around just right, frankly."

Most of what the President had to say can be so easily refuted or disproved, if not with reference to the public record then on the evidence of several recently published books (among them *American Dynasty* by Kevin Phillips, Ron Suskind's *The Price of Loyalty*, Molly Ivins's *Bushwhacked*, and *The Lies of George W. Bush* by David Corn), that I don't think it necessary to argue with each of the already discredited assertions. A few of them serve to make the point: that the war on Iraq was forced on the United States by Saddam Hussein; that the war is in no way "political"; that Saddam possessed a vast store of monstrous weapons; that the Bush Administration's budgets are not constructed with false numbers and fraudulent projections; that America's word is now credible in the world because everybody knows that we mean what we say; that the commission appointed by the President to assess the country's intelligence capabilities surely will come forth, four months after the November election, with an honest accounting. Senator John McCain (R., Ariz.) deconstructed the last-named assurance on the day that he was appointed to the commission in question. Before examining a single witness or document, he said: "The President of

the United States, I believe, would [illegible] tion for political gain or otherwise."

[illegible] the President of the United States [illegible] know that no matter what the matter under discussion—Iraq, the [illegible] the environment, the distribution of tax refunds—the White House manipulates every phrase of every speech and press release to no other purpose except that of political gain. But if the substance of what the President said on Meet the Press contributed nothing to the inventory of general disinformation, the form and manner of the interview added to the common store of what John Adams named as "that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge" available to a free people, "I mean, of the character and conduct of their rulers."

Among students of the Washington talk-show circuit Russert enjoys the reputation of a prosecutor so fierce in his cross-examinations that politicians supposedly tremble when crossing the threshold of his studio, afraid that he will expose them as cheats and liars. On the showing of his conversation with President Bush, the reputation is undeserved. The questions were polite, few of them followed with the indignity of a request for further clarification, and it was impossible to escape the impression of a prep-school headmaster listening to the richest boy in the senior class explain how and why he had burned down the library and the gymnasium. Both parties to the interview understood that the boy wasn't going to be expelled. The family money had sustained the school for five generations; the name was engraved on the hockey rink, the boathouse, and the memorial gate. What was at issue was the young man's continuing progress toward a mature appreciation of the art of good citizenship. The destruction of the library and the gym was obviously an accident; so was the loss of the five townspeople unfamiliar with the school's emergency procedures—regrettable, but not something that could have been avoided.

The headmaster didn't expect any mucking around in the swamp of vain regret (flowers had been sent, the lawyers paid, a stained-glass window donated to the village church), but at least it was conceivable that the boy might redirect a few words of apology or remorse. Here he was on his best behavior in a stiff-backed chair (dark suit, blue tie, clean shoes), and why not say that he was sorry, didn't mean to hurt anybody, meant not what he had in mind at all.

Young Master Bush didn't condescend to tell so sad a story. Excuses were for scholarship students, not for the captain of the crew team. Certain that his conduct and deportment were noble, true, and right, he reminded the headmaster that the bonfire was the biggest one ever built in the history of the school; that he had wanted to show the proper spirit, to salute the undefeated football season, pay tribute to the parents and alumni proudly assembled on the lawn. It wasn't his fault that the wood was rotten and the intel less than perfect; nobody told him that fireworks sometimes have a way of getting crazily out of hand, and for the entire duration of the prerecorded hour he presented the headmaster not with an explanation, much less with an admission of possible error, but with a boastful flow of pious sentiment and a stalwart repetition of imaginary facts.

The President's performance was sufficiently awful to behold that it alarmed the gentry in the conservative as well as in the liberal press. The *New York Times* editorial page predictably found that "none of what we heard made much sense"; less predictable were the concerns voiced by the Republican loyalists on the reactionary right: Robert Novak ("This failure," "inadequate"), David Brooks ("Like most of us, President Bush doesn't have the facility for perfectly expressing his situation in conversation"), Peggy Noonan ("He seemed in some way disconnected from the event")

Even the bad reviews contrived to miss the point. Like the President's critics, the President's admirers make the mistake of assuming that he gives much of a damn about the intelligence product, about what does or doesn't happen in Iraq, about the success or failure of the steel tariff, the Environmental Protection Act, or the public schools. Although comforting, the assumption is impertinent. To the President's way of thinking, the only important story is the one about George W. Bush—what he feels and how he looks; Pontifex Maximus, the country's Celebrity in Chief, uninterested in history, lacking any frame of reference except the stage on which George W. Bush, the only actor in the play, must please George W. Bush, the only audience.

To Russert the President had said, "And the American people need to know they got a president who sees the world the way it is," which, of all the tales told to the NBC cameras, was by far the most fantastic. Mr. Bush sees the world the way he chooses to see it, preferably in a mirror. For the first time in the country's history, this year's federal budget has been illustrated with handsome four-color photographs, twenty-seven of them of the President at the foot of the Washington Monument, in front of the American flag, blazing a trail through the Santa Monica mountains, teaching a small child to read the alphabet.

The narcissism is hereditary, not only within the Bush family but also within the American ruling and possessing classes that over the last fifty years have come to regard themselves as virtuous as well as rich, the masters and commanders of *Starship Earth*. The children of fortune learn to conceive the making of foreign policy as some sort of sporting event—a nation is slave or free, north or south, Christian or Muslim, "with us or against us." They believe themselves entitled to a view from the box seats or the deck of an aircraft carrier, from which vantage point, glory be to God and the science of naval architecture, the world presents itself as object, the United States as subject.

In war, Napoleon once said, the greatest sin is to make pictures, but the man who has inherited a great fortune does nothing else except make pictures. Unlike the poor man, who must study other people's motives and desires if he hopes to gain something from them, the rich man can afford to look only at what comforts or amuses him. He believes what he is told because he has no reason not to do so. What difference does it make? If everything is make

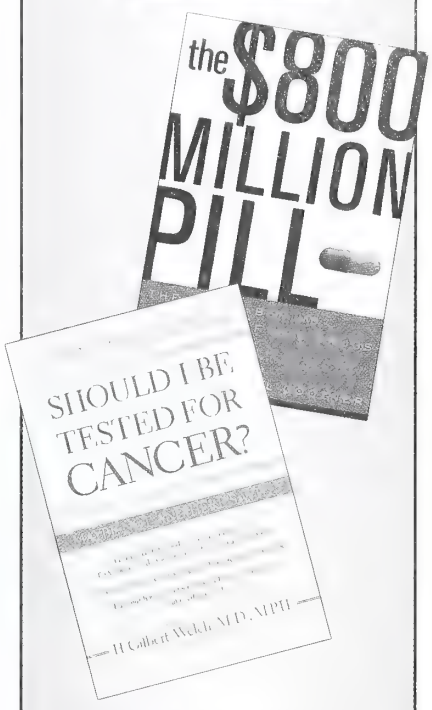
eve, then everything is as plausi-
as everything else. Jonas Savimbi
promise to go among the tribes
instruct them in the magic of con-
utional self-government; the Shah
ran can say that he means to make
emocratic state among people who
ieve that they have won the bless-
of Allah by burning to death 400
oolchildren in a movie theater; the
qi exile Ahmad Chalabi, a known
ef and notorious confidence man,
convince not only Dick Cheney
t also Donald Rumsfeld and Paul
olfowitz that the spirit of Adolf Hitler
urned to earth in the body of Sad-
m Hussein.

To the extent that the business of
e state becomes a matter of con-
ence, our presidents offer the ex-
ession of their private feelings as for-
ulations of public policy, and foreign
litary intervention becomes a drama
the theater of the self. President
nmy Carter promised to redeem the
untry, not to govern it; to the White
ouse situation room he brought rev-
ations instead of policies, envision-
g a Palestinian state risen in the mist
mewhere near the Sea of Galilee,
forming a lobbyist from Boeing that
e had decided against the deploy-
ent of a B-1 bomber because he had
sked God about it, and God had told
im that the bomber could do nothing
ut harm. During the week before the
rst President Bush decided to rescue
omalia from tyranny in the winter of
992, the White House press corps
ound him moody and out-of-sorts, de-
ressed about the loss of that year's
lection and complaining, only partly
n jest, that he had nothing left to do
xcept walk the dogs. His privy coun-
elors recommended the Somalian ad-
venture as a means of raising his spir-
ts. In August 1998, three days after
estifying about his penis before a
Washington grand jury, President
Clinton revenged himself against the
stain on Monica Lewinsky's blue dress
by sending cruise missiles into
Afghanistan and the Sudan.

The American electorate doesn't re-
quire a presidential candidate to know
where to look on the map for Romania
or Zanzibar. His ignorance serves as
proof of virtue. The man who would be
president must present himself as an
innocent and clean-limbed fellow, who
knows nothing of ambition, murder,
cowardice, or lust, and why would such
a true American take the trouble to
read the history of England, India, or
Japan? He never has time to listen to
the whole story or read through the
long list of names that he doesn't know
how to pronounce; he has planes to
catch and meetings to attend, and his
habit of inattention remands the mak-
ing of the country's foreign policy to a
cadre of Wall Street bankers and cor-
porate executives who perform the ser-
vice of family lawyers doing things in
the heir's name but not in his sight.

Unfortunately for the hope of a
democratic republic, the palace guard
often drifts off into the same dream
state that captivates the President.
The documentary film *The Fog of War*
illustrates this dismal tendency in an
extended interview with Robert S.
McNamara, the American secretary
of defense during the Vietnam War
years, 1961–68. The film was released
in early January, but it so happened
that I first saw it during the same week
in which President Bush appeared in
the Oval Office with Headmaster
Russert, and I was struck by the pari-
ty of tone in the two performances.
Like the President, McNamara doesn't
hold himself accountable for his ac-
tions. Yes, mistakes were made and
many people killed to no purpose (3.4
million Vietnamese and 150,000 Cam-
bodians as well as 58,000 Americans),
but killing is what wars are all about,
regrettable but not to be avoided.
Proud to have served his country
("some of the best years of our life . . .
it was terrific!"), McNamara couldn't
think of anything that he might have
done differently, and in place of the
wisdom that other men distill from
suffering, he had collected a set of
schoolboy maxims suitable for mount-
ing on a wall of the Pentagon—"The
human race needs to think more about
killing," "In order to do good you may
have to engage in evil," "Reason has
limits," etc. He awarded himself the
rank and title of "Military Comman-
der," and mostly he talked about his
feelings—not about what happened in
Vietnam but about how it was up there
on the great stage of world events with
a wonderful guy by the name of Robert
S. McNamara, as happily lost as Pres-
ident Bush in the fog of self. ■


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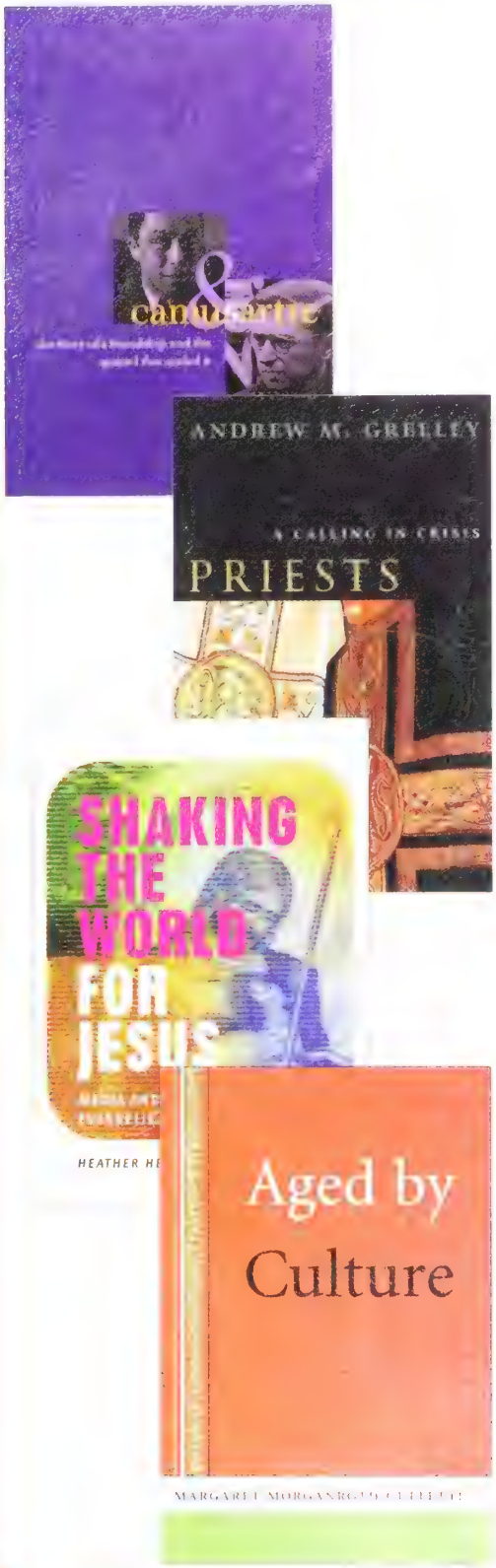
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# HARPER'S INDEX

Number of articles in major U.S. newspapers that have called any White House statement on Iraq a lie : 0

umber of the five tax-cut questions asked the president on *Meet the Press* last winter that concerned the cuts' inequity : 0

Average amount a Bush Cabinet member will save this year due to cuts in capital-gains and dividend taxes : $42,000

Median U.S. household income in 2002 : $42,409

umber of Angola's seven richest citizens who are government officials and former government officials, respectively : 6, 1

Percentage change in Mexico's inflation-adjusted minimum wage since the implementation of NAFTA in 1994 : –21

Last year in which U.S. commercial crude-oil inventories were as low as they were in January : 1975

Rank of 2003 among years in which the most HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths occurred worldwide : 1

Percentage discount that Lesotho's prostitutes offered truckers in 2002 who used a condom : 50

Number of Danes who died from heroin or morphine in 2002 for every Dane who died from methadone that year : 1.06

Number of people in France who are injured each year opening oysters : 2,000

Hours it took two surgeons to separate conjoined turtles in Arizona last February : 4

Number of the 76 reported attempts by bears to break into New Jersey homes last year that were successful : 53

Estimated percentage of web links for requests to "unsubscribe" from mass emails that fail : 63

ercentage of U.S. voters whose 2004 vote will be cast via a computer system producing no paper record : 29 (see page 83)

Number of votes cast in New Hampshire's Republican primary this year for write-in Democratic candidates : 8,092

Number of votes by which George W. Bush won the state in November 2000 : 7,211

Percentage of Afghans who have registered to vote : 3

Ratio of the number of Afghan men who have registered to the number of women who have done so : 10:3

Amount Iraqi parents were paid for naming sons born on Saddam Hussein's birthday after him : $200

linimum number of Iraq's Saddam Husseins who have officially changed their names or are in the process of doing so : 300

lonthly bonus an Indian chief of police is paying his officers who grow mustaches, which, he believes, command respect : 66¢

Number of countries whose technologies are suspected of having contributed to Pakistan's nuclear program : 6

Number of countries that have received Pakistani nuclear technology : 4

Estimated number of years that guards at the top U.S. nuclear storehouse have cheated during anti-terrorism drills : 20

Year in which Citigroup formed a company called Buconero, Italian for "black hole," to help Parmalat conceal debt : 1999

Factor by which a blimp being developed for the U.S. government by Lockheed Martin exceeds the size of Goodyear's : 25

Number of plaques bearing biblical verses that the Park Service reinstalled at the Grand Canyon last year : 3 (see page 27)

Number of states that do not use the word "evolution" in their science curricula : 5

Number of states in which felons who have completed their sentence are not allowed to vote : 11

actor by which Florida's white defendants are more likely than blacks to get a plea bargain blocking felony conviction : 1.5

Median income of black U.S. families as a percentage of white families' in 1968 and 2002, respectively : 60, 58

Number of cents a U.S. woman earned for every dollar that a U.S. man did in 1983 and 2000, respectively : 80.4, 79.7

Factor by which the average pay of a pro baseball player and a Fortune 500 CEO, respectively, have increased since 1973 : 16, 4

Maximum fine in Baltimore for dancing or not standing during the singing of the national anthem : $100

Amount spent worldwide on mobile-phone ring tones, expressed as a percentage of the global music market : 10

Number of MP3 players designed to be clipped inside an AK-47's ammunition chamber sold worldwide last year : 10,000

Percentage of U.S. elementary schools that eliminated recess between 1977 and 1997 : 40

Number of snowballs a New York City man sold on the street one day last December : 10

Profits he reaped : $9.50

*Figures cited are adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of February 2004. Sources are listed on page 78.*
*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*

# SEPTEMBER SWOON

RICHIE ALLEN, THE '64 PHILLIES, AND RACIAL INTEGRATION

William C. Kashatus

"It was this 1964 summer that the Philadelphia Phillies, who played in a stadium not far from the site of the riot, were contending for the pennant, after years of mediocrity. It was the year that Richie Allen, their muscular rookie third baseman, would become the team's first black superstar. It is the story of Philadelphia in the summer of 1964, of this particular Philadelphia team, of this particular player, Richie Allen, that William C. Kashatus tells so richly and compellingly in *September Swoon*. My only surprise is that no one told this story sooner."

—from the foreword by Gerald Early

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Photo Courtesy Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

At his last game at Connie Mack Stadium, on September 29, 1969, a homemade banner reminds Richie Allen that his days with the Phillies are numbered.

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# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE LAST CRITIQUE

*From "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?" by Bruno Latour, from the Winter 2004 issue of* Critical Inquiry.

Wars. So many wars. Cultural wars, science wars, and wars against terrorism. Wars against drugs and wars against the poor. Wars against ignorance and wars out of ignorance. My question is simple: Should we be at war, too—we, the scholars, the intellectuals? Is it really our duty to add fresh ruins to the fields? Is it the task of the humanities to add deconstruction to destruction? What has become of the critical spirit? Has it run out of steam?

My worry is that critique might not be aiming at the right target. To remain effective, military experts constantly revise their strategic doctrines, their contingency plans, the size, direction, and technology of their projectiles. We have not been as quick, in academia, to prepare ourselves for new threats, new tasks, new targets. Would it not be rather terrible if we were still training young recruits for wars that are no longer possible, fighting enemies long gone, conquering territories that no longer exist? Generals have always been accused of being one war late—especially French generals, especially these days. Would it be so surprising if intellectuals were also one war late, one critique late—especially French intellectuals, especially now? It has been a long time since intellectuals were in the vanguard. We may still be able to go through the motions of a critical avant-garde, but is not the spirit gone?

What has become of critique, I wonder, when an editorial in the *New York Times* contains the following quotation from Republican strategist Frank Luntz:

> "Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific certainty a primary issue."

Do you see why I am worried? I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show "the lack of scientific certainty" inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a "primary issue." But I did not try to fool the public by obscuring the certainty of a closed argument—or did I? I'd like to believe that, on the contrary, I intended to *emancipate* the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts. But was I mistaken? Have things changed so fast?

Perhaps the danger no longer stems from an excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact—which we have learned to combat so efficiently—but from an excessive *distrust* of good matters of fact disguised as bad ideological biases. While we spent years trying to detect the prejudices hidden behind the appearance of objective statements, do we now have to reveal the objective and incontrovertible facts hidden behind the illusion of prejudices? Entire Ph.D. programs are running to ensure that good American kids learn that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always pris-

ticular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same arguments to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives. Why does it burn my tongue to say that global warming is a fact?

[Pedagogy]

## ANOTHER BURKA IN THE WALL

*From the teacher's notes on* ISLAM: A Simulation of Islamic History and Culture, *presented as evidence in a lawsuit filed against the Byron Union School District in California on behalf of Christian students attending Byron/Excelsior Public School. As part of the simulation, seventh-grade students were instructed to memorize Muslim prayers and to imitate fasting during Ramadan by skipping lunch. The suit is currently pending before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.*

How will ISLAM work? For about three weeks, your students will simulate becoming Muslims. Your students will be assigned to a city, choose an Arabic name, and compete in several phases of the simulation.

- As in other cultures, appropriate clothing is worn according to the dictates of climate, occasion, etc. Boys could wear an Islamic head covering, or "kaffiyeh," held in position by a head cord, or "agal." For girls, a long-sleeved dress, or "chador," can be used and the head covered by a scarf. If a parent or student is good at sewing, a possible activity would be to use an appropriate design for everyone in a group. This could really build group loyalty. Stress that those students who do not dress up will not be allowed to actively participate and must sit at the back of the room.
- To give extra flavor to the presentation, you should use proper phrases like "God willing" and "Allah has power over all things."
- Perhaps, to capture a mood, you could locate and play Arab music or music from other Muslim countries. A stirring substitute for difficult-to-find Middle Eastern music could be the music from *Lawrence of Arabia*, available on videocassette and CD.

Efforts such as these can make your time during ISLAM much more rewarding.

Should I reassure myself by simply saying that the bad guys make use of any weapon at hand, naturalized facts or social construction, as it suits them? Or should we rather bring the sword of critique to critique itself and do a bit of soul-searching—what were we really after when we were so intent on showing the social construction of facts? Nothing guarantees, after all, that we should be right all the time. There is no sure ground, even for criticism. Isn't this what criticism intended to say: that there is no sure ground anywhere? But what does it mean when this argument is taken away from us by the worst possible fellows as a justification for destroying the things we cherish?

Artificially maintained controversies are not the only worrying sign. What has critique become when Jean Baudrillard argues that the twin towers destroyed themselves under their own weight, undermined by the nihilism inherent in capitalism itself, that the terrorist planes were pulled to suicide by the attraction of this black hole of nothingness? What has become of critique when a bestseller can claim that no plane ever crashed into the Pentagon? Remember the good old days when revisionism arrived after the facts had been thoroughly established? Now we have the benefit of what could be called instant revisionism. The smoke of the event has not yet finished rising before dozens of conspiracy theories begin revising the official account, adding even more ruins to the ruins. What has become of critique when my neighbor in my little Bourbonnais village looks down on me as hopelessly naive, because I believe that the United States was attacked by terrorists? Remember the good old days when university professors could look down on unsophisticated folks, because they naively believed in church, motherhood, and apple pie? Things have changed, at least in my village. I am now the one who naively believes in some simple facts, while the other guys are too sophisticated to be gullible. What has become of critique when there is a whole industry denying that *Apollo* landed on the moon? What has become of critique when the Total Information Awareness project uses the Baconian slogan *Scientia est potentia*? Didn't I read that somewhere in Michel Foucault? Has knowledge-slash-power been co-opted by the National Security Agency? Has *Discipline and Punish* become the bedtime reading of Mr. Ridge?

Let me be mean for a moment: what's the real difference between conspiracy theories and a popularized (that is, a teachable) version of social critique inspired by too quick a reading of Pierre Bourdieu? In both cases, you learn to become suspicious of everything people say, because of course we all know that they live in the thrall of a complete *illusio* of their real motives. Then, after dis-



Aqua *(2001) by Los Carpinteros, a group of three artists from Cuba. Their work is currently on display at Anthony Grant, Inc., in New York City.*

belief has struck and an explanation is demanded, it is the same appeal to powerful hidden agents acting always consistently, continuously, relentlessly. Of course, we in the academy like to use more elevated causes—society, knowledge-slash-power, empires, capitalism—while conspiracists like to portray a miserable bunch of greedy people with malevolent intentions, but I find something troublingly similar in the structure of the theories. Of course conspiracy theories are an absurd deformation of our own arguments, but, like weapons smuggled through a fuzzy border to the wrong party, they are our weapons nonetheless.

Perhaps threats have simply changed so much that we are directing our arsenal toward an entirely irrelevant battlefield. After all, masses of atomic missiles are transformed into so many piles of junk once the militants are armed with box cutters and dirty bombs. Or maybe it is that critique has been miniaturized. I have always fancied that what took great effort, cost a lot of sweat and money for people such as Nietzsche and Benjamin, can now be had for nothing, much like the supercomputers of the 1950s, which used to fill large halls and expend vast amounts of electricity but are now accessible for a dime and no bigger than a fingernail.

Is this a patrician spite for the popularization of critique? As if critique should be reserved for the elite and remain difficult and strenuous, like mountain climbing or yachting? We have been complaining about the gullible masses swallowing naturalized facts; would it be unfair now to discredit the same masses for their gullible criticism? Are we like mad scientists who have loosed the virus of critique and now cannot do anything as it mutates, gnawing up everything, even the vessels in which it is contained? Or is it another case of the famed power of capitalism to recycle everything aimed at its destruction? If the dense and moralist cigar-smoking reactionary bourgeois can transform him- or herself into a free-floating agnostic bohemian, moving opinions, capital, and networks from one end of the planet to the other without attachment, why would he or she not be able to absorb the most sophisticated tools of deconstruction, social construction, discourse analysis, postmodernism?

I am not trying to reverse course, to become reactionary, to regret what I have done. My argument is that a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, because of a little mistake in the definition of our main target. The question was never to get away from facts but to get closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing it.

The critical mind, if it is to be relevant again, must devote itself to the cultivation of a stubborn realism, [illegible] dealing with what I will call matters of concern, not matters of fact. The mistake we made, the mistake I made, was to believe that there was no efficient way to criticize matters of fact except by moving away from them and directing one's attention toward the conditions that made them possible. But this meant accepting too uncritically what matters of fact are. Critique has not been critical enough in spite of all its sore-scratching. Reality is not defined by matters of fact. Matters of fact are only very partial and very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern. It is this second empiricism, this return to a realist attitude, that I'd like to offer as the next task for the critically minded.

Whereas the Enlightenment profited largely from the disposition of a very powerful descriptive tool, that of matters of fact—which were excellent for debunking quite a lot of beliefs, powers, and illusions—it found itself totally disarmed once matters of fact, in turn, were eaten up by the same debunking impetus. After that, the lights of the Enlightenment were slowly turned off, and some sort of darkness appears to have fallen on campuses. My question is thus: Can we devise another descriptive tool that deals this time with matters of concern and whose import will no longer be to debunk but to protect and to care? Is it really possible to transform the critical urge to an ethos that *adds* reality to matters of fact and does not *subtract* from it?

We can summarize 90 percent of the contemporary critical scene with two positions: the fact position and the fairy position. The fairy position is very well known and is used over and over again by social scientists who associate criticism with anti-fetishism. The critic shows that what the naive believers are doing with objects is simply a projection of their wishes onto a material entity that does nothing at all by itself. Here they have diverted to their petty use the prophetic fulmination against idols—"they have mouths and speak not, they have ears and hear not"—and they use this prophecy to decry the objects of belief—gods, fashion, poetry, sport, desire. And then the courageous critic, who alone remains aware and attentive, turns those false objects into fetishes that are nothing but empty screens on which is projected the power of society, domination, whatever. The naive believer has received a first salvo.

But wait, a second is in the offing, now from the fact pole. This time it is the poor bloke whose behavior is "explained" by the powerful effects of indisputable matters of fact: "You, ordinary fetishists, believe you are free, but in reality you are acted on by forces you are not conscious of," and here you insert whichever pet facts you fancy, from economic infrastructure, social domination, race, class, and gender, maybe throwing in some neurobiology, evolutionary psychology, whatever, provided they act as indisputable facts whose origin, fabrication, and mode of development are left unexamined.

Do you see now why it feels so good to be a critical mind? Why critique, this most ambiguous *pharmakon*, has become such a potent euphoric drug? You are always right! When naive believers claim that they are made to do things because of their gods, their poetry, you can turn all of those attachments into so many fetishes and humiliate them by showing that it is nothing but their own projection, that you—yes, you alone—can see. And as soon as the naive believers are thus inflated by a belief in their own importance, in their own projective capacity, you strike them with a second uppercut and humiliate them again, this time by showing that, whatever they think, their behavior is entirely determined by the action of powerful causalities coming from an objective reality that they don't see, but that you, the never sleeping critic, happily do. Isn't this fabulous? Isn't it really worth going to graduate school to study critique? "Enter here, poor students. After arduous years of reading turgid prose, you will always be right, you will never be taken in again; no one, no matter how powerful, will ever be able to accuse you of the supreme sin of naïveté! Better equipped than Zeus himself, you rule alone, striking from above with anti-fetishism in one hand and the solid causality of objectivity in the other."

One thing is clear: Not one of us would confine our own valuables to their sordid pawnshop. We would recoil in horror at the mere suggestion of having them debunked, whether we deal in poetry or robots, stem cells, black holes, or impressionism, whether we are patriots, revolutionaries, or lawyers, whether we pray to God or put our hopes in neuroscience. What social scientists might do to our cherished objects is so horrific that we don't want them to come any nearer. "Please," we exclaim, "don't touch them at all! Don't try to explain them!" Or: "Why don't you go further down the corridor to this other department? *They* have bad facts to account for; why don't you explain away theirs instead of ours?" And this is why, when we want respect, solidity, robustness, we all prefer to stick to

the language of matters of fact, in spite of its well-known defects.

And yet this is not the only way, because the cruel treatment objects undergo at the hands of what I'd like to call critical barbarity is rather easy to undo. If the critical barbarian appears so powerful, it is because the two mechanisms I have just sketched are never played against each other. The whole rather poor trick that allows critique to go on is that there is never any crossover between the fact position and the fairy position. This is why you can be at once and without sensing any contradiction (1) an anti-fetishist for everything you don't believe in—religion, popular culture, art, politics; (2) an unrepentant positivist for all you believe in—sociology, economics, genetics, evolutionary psychology, semiotics; and (3) a perfectly healthy realist for what you really cherish—and, of course, it might be criticism itself but also painting, bird-watching, Shakespeare, baboons, or proteins.

Indeed, we have so far had almost no occasion to detect the total mismatch of three contradictory repertoires—anti-fetishism, positivism, realism—because we carefully manage to apply them to different topics. But, of course, such a cavalier attitude is not possible for those of us in science studies, who have to deal with objects that don't fit in the list of plausible fetishes—because everyone, including us, believes very strongly in them. This is why, with some bias, I consider this field so important; it is the little rock in the shoe that might render the routine patrol of the critical barbarians more and more painful.

It would be a mistake to believe that we have provided a social explanation of scientific facts. No, though we did try, like good critics trained in the good schools, to use the tools handed to us by our betters and elders to "crack open"—one of their favorite expressions, meaning to destroy—religion, power, discourse, hegemony. But fortunately (yes, fortunately!), one after the other, we found that the black boxes of science remained closed and that it was rather the tools that lay in the dust of our workshop, disjointed and broken. Put simply, critique is useless against objects of some solidity. You can try the projective game on UFOs or exotic divinities, but don't try it on neurotransmitters, gravitation, or Monte Carlo calculations.

On both accounts, matters of concern never occupy the two positions left for them by critical barbarity. Such objects are much too strong to be treated as fetishes and much too weak to be treated as indisputable causal explanations of some unconscious action. And this is not true of science only. This is our great discovery: once you realize that scientific objects cannot be socially explained, then you realize too that the objects that appear to be candidates for anti-fetishism were never mere projections on an empty screen. They too act, they too do things, they too *make you do* things. It is not only the objects of science that resist but all the others as well, those that were supposed to have

[Pastiche]

## BLOOD AND SOIL

*From "A Brave and Moving Response to the Refusenik Pilots," a satire published last October in the chain of magazines owned by the Israeli daily* Ma'ariv. *Written in reaction to the debate following the September 24 declaration by twenty-seven Israeli pilots that they would not take part in "illegal and immoral" attacks on civilian population centers, the column ran with the byline A. Schicklgruber—Hitler's original family name—and consists entirely of quotations from* Mein Kampf *and other writings and speeches of Hitler's. Its author, Yehuda Nuriel, was later fired. The English version was compiled by Oz Shelach from existing translations, and published on his website, oznik.com.*

Those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live. We must fight to safeguard the existence of our people, the sustenance of our children, and the freedom and independence of the fatherland, so that our people may mature for the fulfillment of the mission allotted them by the Creator.

The war against our enemies cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion. This struggle is one of ideologies and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful, and unrelenting harshness. It must be thoroughly understood that the lost land will never be won back by solemn appeals to God, but only by the force of arms. A single blow must destroy the enemy, without regard for losses. Success is the sole earthly judge of right and wrong.

What poison did our press dish out to the people before the violent events? Wasn't the worst kind of pacifism injected into the heart of our people at a time when the rest of the world was preparing to throttle us, slowly but surely? Even in peacetime, didn't the press inspire the minds of the people with doubt in the right of their own state?

If we are forced to send the flowers of the nation into the hell of war, then surely we have the right to remove millions of another race that breeds like vermin. For we are fighting not for ourselves but for the whole country.

[Projection]

# THE BIG ONE

*From one of the fifty winning entries in a contest to design a warning sign for a planned nuclear dump site at Yucca Mountain, Nevada. The contest, sponsored by the Nevada Desert Space Foundation, aimed to find a symbol whose meaning would outlast the projected life-span of contemporary languages and cultures, as the nuclear waste will remain dangerously radioactive for more than ten thousand years. The proposal by Paul Schulmeyer was a contribution to a fine drawing of an exact penis. Conceptual artists will exhibit the winning entries later this year.*

My proposal is to mark the nuclear repository with a phallic symbol to warn present and future generations and the gods, especially those



COURTESY BONNI BENRUBI GALLERY AND RONNY PINSKY GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

*"Namibia Sand House, #23," a photograph by Richard Ehrlich, was taken in Kolmanskop, which has been a ghost town since 1928. Ehrlich's work can be viewed at Bonni Benrubi Gallery, in New York City.*

seems very likely, our culture should perish. The human phallus presents an immediately and universally recognizable symbol which transcends language and culture. Humans thus ought to have the ability to recognize this symbol as long as we retain our present anatomy. That our anatomy might change drastically in the next ten thousand years appears very unlikely, and if mutations become prevalent, a nuclear disaster of some sort must surely have taken place, and warning signs of any sort would serve no purpose.

I take the phallus to symbolize at once hierarchical and territorial dominance. Of course, some feminists would have much to say about phallocentric folly, but this behavior is a fact of life even in the most enlightened times. The phallus, therefore, presents an image which, for the foreseeable future of our species, should occasion attitudes of respect and circumspection in its beholder. This image ought to cause respect for possible hierarchies represented and circumspection for possible territories defended. Indeed, the very fact that I am using erudite euphemisms to refer to this portion of the human anatomy, not to mention the fact that many, if not most, people will initially react with unease and even aversion to a mere proposal to use the image of an erect penis as a warning sign, attests to the deterrent power this symbol will have on future generations.

I have also drawn the phallus to resemble, albeit suggestively, an atomic explosion. Some people, of course, might be so bold as to argue that all warfare, including atomic warfare, is a mere manifestation of our biological heritage. Whether or not we accept their argument, we may nevertheless admit that, even if our culture does not survive, some remnants of nuclear explosions and their mushroom clouds may yet figure in the memory or the myths of another culture years hence.

I would suggest that this image be carved on natural rock outcroppings along the perimeter of the proposed repository. The carvings ought to be especially prominent near its entrance. These carved images would very likely resist human tampering, given the labor required to alter or to remove them. They would also endure in the desert environment. Indeed, archaic petroglyphs of cultures unknown to us are now found in the Mojave.

My proposal, then, is that the nuclear repository be a modest one-kilometer-square monument warning sign, a symbol designed to engender hesitation and caution in future generations. My fear is that my nuclear repository will inevitably be breached. But my hope is that with phallic warning signs, most people would not be [illegible] The few who do eventually enter will no doubt soon learn for themselves of its [illegible]

[Beau Ideal]

# A L'AMERICAINE

*By Anton Chekhov, from the Spring 2003 issue of* Conjunctions. *Translated from the Russian by Peter Constantine.*

Experiencing the strongest whim to enter a thoroughly lawful marriage, and being in full realization that no marriage can be entered into without a female of the species, I have the honor, happiness, and pleasure to ask all widows and young maidens to cast a favorable eye on the following:

First and foremost, I am a man. Needless to say, that is a point of some importance to the ladies. I stand one yard and twenty-seven inches tall. I am young. I vouch that I am as far from middle age as a flock of sandpipers would be from Novosibirsk on St. Peter's Day. I am of noble lineage. Not much to look at, but not all that bad either, so much so that I have been repeatedly mistaken for a handsome man, albeit only on moonless nights. I have hazel eyes. My cheeks (alas!) are undimpled. Two of my back teeth are rotten. I have a hard time assuming graceful manners, but I would not advise anyone to doubt the strength of my muscles. I wear size 7¼ gloves. I have nothing to my name but my poor, though well-born, parents.

I do, however, have an illustrious future ahead of me. I am a great devotee of pretty women in general and parlor maids in particular. I believe in everything. I am a man of letters, and so successful that I am above shedding tears when rejection slips come pouring in. I see a novel in my future, the heroine of which (a wanton but exquisite beauty) will be modeled on my wife. I sleep twelve hours a night. I eat mountains of food. I drink vodka only in company. I have a commendable circle of friends. I know two literati, one ditty writer, and two rakes who have dedicated their lives to the betterment of mankind by penning newspaper articles for the *Russian Gazette*. My favorite poets are Pushkarev and, at times, myself. I am amorous but not in the least jealous. I wish to marry for reasons known only to myself and my creditors. That, in a nutshell, is me.

Now to what I am looking for in a wife. She must be either a widow or a maiden, whichever she prefers, not older than thirty and not younger than fifteen. She must not be Catholic—in other words, one of those women who believe that there is such a thing as an infallible man—and definitely not a Jewess. A Jewess would never tire of badgering me. I would not like that. I would like a blonde with blue eyes and (please, if in any way possible) with dark eyebrows. She mustn't be pale, or flushed, or thin, or plump, or tall, or squat, or have her hair cropped short, or be garrulous, or never want to go anywhere, but be pleasant and not possessed by demons.

She must have good handwriting, because I need someone to copy out my pieces. Not that there's much to copy out.

She must love the magazines I write for, and follow the life they advocate.

She must not read the *Playful Tattler*, the *New Daily*, or that dreadful book *Nana*, and she should not be moved by the feature articles of the *Moscow News*, or swoon at the poetry they keep printing in *Berega*.

She must be able to sing, dance, read, write, boil, roast, fry, grill (but without raking me over the coals), be sweet and tender, be good at borrowing money for her husband, and have a knack for dressing herself elegantly using her *own financial resources* (N.B.), and live in absolute obedience.

She must not niggle, hiss, squawk, yell, bite, bare her teeth, throw plates, or bat her eyelashes at friends of the family.

It is important she remember that horns do not adorn a man's head, and that the shorter they are the safer is he who will be made to pay for the horns.

She must not be called Matryonna, Akulina, Avdoteya, or other such vulgar names, but have a nobler name (such as Olya, Lenochka, Maruska, Katya, Lipa, etc.).

She must at all times keep her dear mama, my highly esteemed mother-in-law, well away from me somewhere at the back of beyond, otherwise I cannot be held accountable for my actions, and—

She must have a minimum of two hundred thousand rubles in silver.

This stipulation, however, is negotiable at the discretion of my creditors.

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The Sphinx and the Great Pyramids, Giza, Egypt.

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[Queries]

# MULLAH, MAY I?

*From questions received by the Mufti, editor of Ask-Imam.com, a South African website on which Mufti Ebrahim Desai issues fatwas in response to questions asked by visitors to the site.*

[illegible] in front of husband?

Is it permissible for a man to look at his wife's private parts including below the navel and vice versa, during intimacy? I've heard one can become blind.

If a wife pleases her husband by masturbation & their private parts do not touch, is bath compulsory for her?

Please tell me that if wife is willing then can the husband throw his semen over her willing body?

Mouth to Mouth Kissing—do you mean that this act is very good and highly appreciated between husband and wife in their normal relationship without fasting?

Can we squeeze our wives' breast? Can we lick them and suck their nipples and have fun with their breasts?

Is it permissible to sleep in nude, either alone or with one's wife?

Could you tell me is it okay for husband and wife to have sexual intercourse in public areas provided no one is around?

Is it permissible to insert one's finger into wife's anus for pleasure of wife?

Is it permissible for me to get married with an interest-based loan to stop committing fornication?

I would like to know, can a man have sex with two or more of his wives in one room?

Is there any prayer for a woman whose husband doesn't fulfill her sexually (no foreplay, etc.), who can she reveal these frustrations to, without getting sin for revealing bedroom secrets?

Is it permissible for a husband to use things apart from the body parts—hands or fingers—on his wife during foreplay, esp. if she is difficult to please?

Is it halal to use corporal punishment to chastise my wife for wearing makeup and scanty Western garb?

Is it allowed to have intercourse with your wife during daytime? Is it allowed to have intercourse while standing?

I am a married man, but I often go and see other girls. How far can I take it, before it becomes a sin?

Can Muslim wife and husband kiss/suck each other's body parts strongly? I mean whole body (breast, lips, tongue, penis, vagina).

My husband drank my milk a few times out of lust, [illegible] I was breast feeding my baby 5 yrs back. Why should we do now?

Does kissing and/or hugging one's wife break the *wudhu* [ablution prior to prayer]?

Is it permissible to talk (words of love/affection) to my wife during sexual intercourse?

Why am I not married at age 23?

Is marrying a first cousin Islamically disliked?

Is satisfying the wife in bed obligatory in Islam?

How important should the beard and the dressing be when a woman is considering a marriage proposal? Should she refuse if the man doesn't possess a beard and wears pants below his ankles, though his character may be excellent?

[Roman à Clef]

# THE SUNNI ALSO RISES

*From* Be Gone, Demons, *a novel by Saddam Hussein. Forty thousand copies of the book were printed last Spring, though almost all were destroyed in air strikes. Saddam is believed to have spent his last weeks as dictator working on the novel. Hundreds of thousands of copies of Saddam's previous three novels were sold in Iraq. Translated from the Arabic by Jack Fairweather, the* Daily Telegraph*'s Baghdad correspondent.*

Salim came to the house carrying his sword with his face covered by a scarf. It was the dead of night and only his black eyes could be seen. Salim was leading the young people of his tribe in a fight against Hescel [the Jew]. Hescel was hateful, ungenerous, and thin. He had a long patchy beard connected with his mustache, and he wore trousers like a farmer. Hescel and his Roman allies attacked Salim many times, but he always fought them off. Salim made war on Hescel and captured many of the sons of Roman tribal leaders. No one in the country loved Hescel, who ruled only with the connivance of the Romans.

Salim entered the house and revealed himself. When Ledher saw him, she noticed that Salim was tall, with dark eyes, a straight nose, and a natural face. "He's so confident," Ledher thought. Ledher asked him if he was prepared to drive out the demon Hescel.

Salim said, "The intention and power are available. I have made my evaluation of the demon. My forces and I are assured of victory against those dogs."

He smiled when he said this. Ledher warned him that the sheikhs of the tribe had been corrupted and put their destiny in the hands of the Romans, and they could not be trusted to rise up in rebellion.

Salim was struck by the intelligence of Ledher's words. He reassured her, "My forces have organized themselves. We now have a network of informers who tell me what Hescel is up to."

Now it was Ledher's turn to be astonished by Salim's command of the situation. They agreed that they must never submit to Hescel or the Romans' rule.

"We must save our poor people from the control of foreigners and give them back their dignity," said Salim. He knew Ledher had faith and a desire to fight the negative situation.

He said, "We are most thankful that you, Ledher, are still pure. You are the figurehead of the people. Will you marry me?"

Ledher said, "Salim, my cousin. Even if marriage were not dictated to us by custom, I would want to become your wife. Yes, I will. But we must keep it secret so that Hescel does not hear about it."

But Hescel had plans of his own. He also wanted to marry Ledher but was married to Ledher's mother. He tried to talk the mother into a new arrangement with her daughter. She refused, so Hescel beat her to death and fled.

Ledher discovered her mother's tent ripped down and her bloody corpse inside. She began to cry uncontrollably. Salim was informed. He said, "This is the final act of injustice. Hescel must be killed at once and his Roman allies driven out of this country for good."

When Hescel heard about Salim's angry words he grew nervous. He immediately sent a messenger to the Roman king to beg for his help in crushing the revolt. The king happily agreed, telling Hescel's messenger, "Be calm, we have enough equipment and men to crush Salim's gang with ease. We hear that they are just a bunch of thieves without weapons. It will be like a picnic."

But as the messenger was about to ride back, the Roman king, growing suddenly concerned, called after him, "Are you sure they don't have any weapons?" When he was told they did not, the Roman king gave the order for his tribal leaders to ready themselves.

In the morning they set off early to meet Hescel. They saw a single rider up ahead. "Don't let him escape!" shouted the Roman king, fearing it was one of Salim's scouts. But it turned out to be Hescel. "Where is your army?" the Roman king asked. Hescel replied that the number of his followers was so great they would lose the element of surprise if they rode with him. Hescel said, "My army will block out the sun in their number."

It was the beginning of April when the Roman king rode at the head of his army, and hundreds of little birds were a-wing. As every Arab knows, the month of April, like September, marks the change of seasons. They always bring surprises. Salim's army was lying in wait.

The Roman king gave the order to charge. He had expected to find Salim's men unarmed, but instead he found the men with weapons and even the women prepared to fight. The first line of Salim's army shot at the Roman riders with arrows. When the Roman riders fell down the women of the tribe beat them with sticks or killed them with swords. The people were shouting, "*Allah Wa'akbar*," God Is Great!

Then Salim entered the fray. He took off his shirt and he freed his long hair. He was so strong. He was fighting the Romans like a hawk. He was riding a white horse that he called Hawk. He was shouting, "*Allah Wa'akbar!* Let the debased be debased, and let Hescel and the Roman dogs be debased. Long live Islam. Damn the pagans!"

The Romans ran away as Salim got close to them. When his enemies' swords were broken he ordered his colleagues to give them fresh swords so that they could continue fighting. It was a chivalrous custom passed down from his grandfathers that had stuck with him.

Ledher was watching him fight the Romans and thought he was very brave. She watched the defeat of Hescel and the Roman king and rejoiced.

Salim chased the remains of the Roman army until late into the night. Finally he stopped, assured of victory, and wept. A verse from the Koran came into his mind: "God, most beneficent and merciful, disrupted the invaders' plot to take over the land. He sent against them birds carrying stones and destroyed the invaders."

Hescel and the Roman king returned to their own country to find the twin towers of the Roman capital on fire. Hescel smote his face and said, "Everything I've collected is gone!" One of the Roman soldiers, bitter in defeat, laughed at Hescel and advised him, "Try building another two towers and sell the one and rent the other to the Roman king! Both you and the Roman king will rot in hell."

Arabs had set the twin towers on fire. How adventurous they are when they become nervous!

The Romans watched the blaze and wondered who had done it. The king said, "Our enemies are great in number." Hescel answered, "No. Such a fedayeen attack could only be carried out by the Arabs!"

Hescel and the Roman leader ran away after that because they had lost all their power and money.



*Self Portrait with Pink Mask*, *Self Portrait in Black Mask*, *and Self Portrait in Thrift Store Mask*, *by Juliet Karelsen. Karelsen's work can be viewed at Zero Station, in Portland, Maine.*

[Violations]

# PATRIOT ACTS

*From the* Report on September 11 Detainees' Allegations of Abuse at the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York, *released last December by the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General. After an initial complaint, the MDC was required to record the movements of the detainees on videotapes, which "confirmed many of the detainees' allegations . . . even though the detainees alleged that the abuse dropped off precipitously after video cameras were introduced." None of the more than 1,200 foreign nationals detained after September 11, 2001, has been charged with a terrorism-related crime.*

### SLAMMING, BOUNCING, AND RAMMING DETAINEES AGAINST WALLS

Many detainees alleged that they were slammed against the wall where a T-shirt was taped to the wall. The T-shirt had a picture of the U.S. flag and the phrase THESE COLORS DON'T RUN on it. Two staff members told us they observed blood on the T-shirt. In our view, the way in which the T-shirt was used by staff members was highly unprofessional.

### BENDING DETAINEES' ARMS, HANDS, WRISTS, AND FINGERS

The detainees said staff members bent their arms up into the middle of their backs, pulled their thumbs back, twisted their fingers and wrists, and bent their wrists forward toward their arms. One lieutenant told us that it was possible that officers intentionally twisted the injured hand of one detainee, "just because it's human nature."

### LIFTING DETAINEES, PULLING ARMS, AND PULLING HANDCUFFS

On videotapes we observed MDC staff members carry compliant detainees, pull detainees' arms in a way that painfully strained their handcuffed wrists, and forcefully hurry detainees during escorts. We did not substantiate detainees' allegations that staff members dragged them on the ground, lifted them solely by their chains, or refused to let their feet touch the ground for days.

### ROUGH OR INAPPROPRIATE HANDLING OF DETAINEES

One of the lieutenants said that some officers "tried to prove that they were men or prove that America was superior" by being unprofessional or overly aggressive with the detainees.

### VERBAL ABUSE

Detainees alleged that staff members called them names like "terrorists," "mother fuckers," "fucking Muslims," and "Bin Laden Junior." They also said staff members threatened them by saying things like:

"Whatever you did at the World Trade Center, we will do to you."

"You're never going to be able to see your family again."

"Don't ask any questions, otherwise you will be dead."

"I'm going to break your face if you breathe or move at all."

One detainee stated that when the detainees prayed, officers said things like, "Shut the fuck up! Don't pray. Fucking Muslim. Your praying bullshit." Another detainee alleged that when the officers were mistreating the detainees, the officers sometimes said, "Welcome to America."

[Theology]

## GOD ROCKS!

*The following was culled from articles in* Grand Canyon: a Different View, *edited by Tom Vail and published by Master Books last year. Last summer the National Park Service approved the book, which presents a creationist view of the formation of the Grand Canyon, for sale in park bookstores and gift shops. In July three bronze plaques bearing biblical verses were reinstated to public viewing areas on the Canyon's South Rim, despite advice from the Interior Department that such religious displays violate the First Amendment. Last fall the National Park Service blocked the publication of a memo for park rangers noting that creationism lacked any scientific basis.*

The Grand Canyon is an awesome display of God's creation and a place to find and explore the wonders of His creation. If we visit the Canyon, or read the prevailing interpretive literature about it, we will find that the views presented are predominantly based on evolutionary theories. These theories tend to deny God's involvement and often His very existence. When viewed from a biblical perspective, however, the Canyon has "God" written all over it. Not only is the Canyon a testimony to creation but it also presents evidence of God's judgment of a world broken by the sin of man, known as "the Fall," as told in the book of Genesis.

Based on the lineages laid out in the Bible, God created the heavens and earth and everything in them in six literal days about 6,000 years ago. Contrary to what is widely believed, radioactive dating has not proven the rocks of the Grand Canyon to be millions of years old. The vast majority of the sedimentary layers in the Grand Canyon were deposited as the result of a global flood that occurred after and as a result of the initial sin that took place in the Garden of Eden. As the great post-Flood continents and mountains began to rise from the waters of a global deluge (Genesis 8:3–5), a huge chasm was formed that is now the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Inland waters, rushing down to the newly deepened ocean basin, rapidly excavated the 5,000-foot-deep layers of mud, silt, and sand that had been deposited during the year of the Flood. And the fossils found in the rock layers are remnants of the plants and animals that perished in the Flood.

Many in the secular and Christian worlds have claimed that the Flood described in the Bible was just a local event (or even myth). However, the God of the Bible made a covenant between Himself and the earth. He promised that whenever a rainbow appeared, it would be a reminder that He would never again bring such a flood on the earth. If Noah's flood was just a local event, then it means that God breaks His promise every time a flood occurs somewhere on earth.

In the book of Joshua, from the Old Testament, the Lord commanded Joshua to build a memorial of twelve stones to remind fathers to teach their children what the Lord had done. The "stones" of the Grand Canyon are also a memorial, a memorial placed there by God to remind fathers to teach their children what He has done—that as a result of sin He judged the earth with a global Flood. The canyon is a grand cathedral, carved in the rocks by water that has eroded, fluted, and polished the walls into shapes fitting for a cathedral. Nowhere else on earth is there such compelling evidence of a young earth that was inundated by a global Flood.

Fossils tell a story, but the story we "read" depends on the "glasses" we are wearing when we do the examination. If we wear our evolutionary glasses, we will get one story. But if we have on our biblical glasses, which allow us to see biblical truth, we will get a very different story. So what kind of story do fossils tell and why is it significant? The first and most significant issue is that fossils represent death! With our biblical glasses on, death comes into the world as the result of man's sin against God. If fossils are in layers millions of years old, then how do we account for all the death, disease, and destruction found in the fossil record if those fossils were formed before the Fall? Genesis 3:18 says that thorns and thistles were a direct consequence of sin. How do we account for the fossils of thorns found deep within the geologic record if they are a result of man's sin? If God declared the world *very good*, which He did at the end of the creation week, could that have included such things as cancer and arthritis, which we also find in the fossil record? As Dr. Duane Gish's book title says, *Evolution: The Fossils STILL Say No!*

As you travel through the Canyon, you will at some point reach bedrock, that hard layer where you can go down no farther. Your travel through life is much the same—at some point

the only way is to look up. Some may question using the Bible as a science and/or history book. But who better to write the instruction manual on the life and history of the universe than God? He created it all! Unlike secular geologists, creationist geologists don't need to speculate about history, because we accept the eyewitness accounts preserved in a reliable written record—the Bible. Man's theories continually change as more scientific "facts" come to light. Yet God has never had to revise His book, because in it there are no mistakes. You can trust God's Word.

[Story]

# EPISODE FROM THE HISTORY

*By Alison Bundy, from the Winter 2004* Kenyon Review.

One evening the twins' mother came to where a few of us were sitting.

"Come, come see."

We went quickly up the stairs behind her. At the door to the twins' room she put a finger to her lips and entered, raising the candle: Frankie tossed in his little bed, whimpering faintly. She crossed the room to his sister's bed: Fanny also tossed, whimpering. She too hit out with a fist at the air. It took us a moment to understand: it might have been only one child before a mirror which reflected movement after the faintest pause.

Now when we think back it is this we remember and not the advent of the book, whose first days are impossible to recall. The book was then in any case a mere curiosity: introduced into the killing jar by the twins, pinned and mounted, displayed between the flat clown beetle and the dog-face butterfly—we stood before it from time to time as the twins inclined their dark heads beneath it, like toward like, murmuring in the conspiracy of their blood, and then we moved on to their next prize, their newest darling.

No, we admit, we thought nothing of it. It was not until the arrival of the prestidigitator Wei-Ha that we saw something of the secret life of the book. Wei-Ha—even now the name evokes wonder, and coins spin circles through space on a stage, never falling, and rabbits appear, dressed in silk, and music issues from the pink mouths, Alleluia, Alleluia, and bells ring and they're gone, and rose petals float in a cone of light, float and then fall.

It was almost winter when he came to us—the great heavy clouds had closed over our valley and we sensed in the air and in the tarnished light the snow not yet fallen. Soon—one, two months at most—ice would be universal and the mountains unpassable.

He had come twice before, and with a retinue: his was a legerdemain requiring painted chests, velvet bags, drum and trumpet, assistants. And he had brought opening entertainments: one was a pale, beautiful woman whose voice was, it seemed, only a small part human, the rest bird. Oh her songs made us feel quite strange, and as the odd, final notes shivered about us she opened her arms and the sleeves of her white gown spread like wings. And then she rose in the air and swept across the stage.

But the time I am speaking of was not like these other times. The twins announced him, tumbling through the door:

"He's come!—"

"—alone—"

"—no bags—"

"—no one else—"

"—and look!—"

"—excellent!—"

"—snow!"

We went to the window and saw indeed the first flakes, so light they rose on currents of air instead of falling to melt on the ground.

"Did he come ahead of the wagons?" someone asked anxiously: Wei-Ha without criers, cymbals clanging, colored ribbons, seemed inconceivable.

We put on our wraps and walked out into the soft cold air, but the square was empty, snow and nothing else moved about us, until out from a narrow street a group of children came laughing, lifting their faces to the sky.

Our disappointment was sharp, as we had felt a growing excitement not only for the performance but also for the performers' tea, traditionally given the afternoon before the midnight show and hosted each year by a different family. This year the honor was ours, and for weeks we had imagined the exotic ones crowding into our house. Our hopes were extravagant: white birds emerging from the teapot's spout, seedcakes turned to flowers, a whistling monkey riding a pug down the center of the table.

"I'm certain the wagons have been held up."

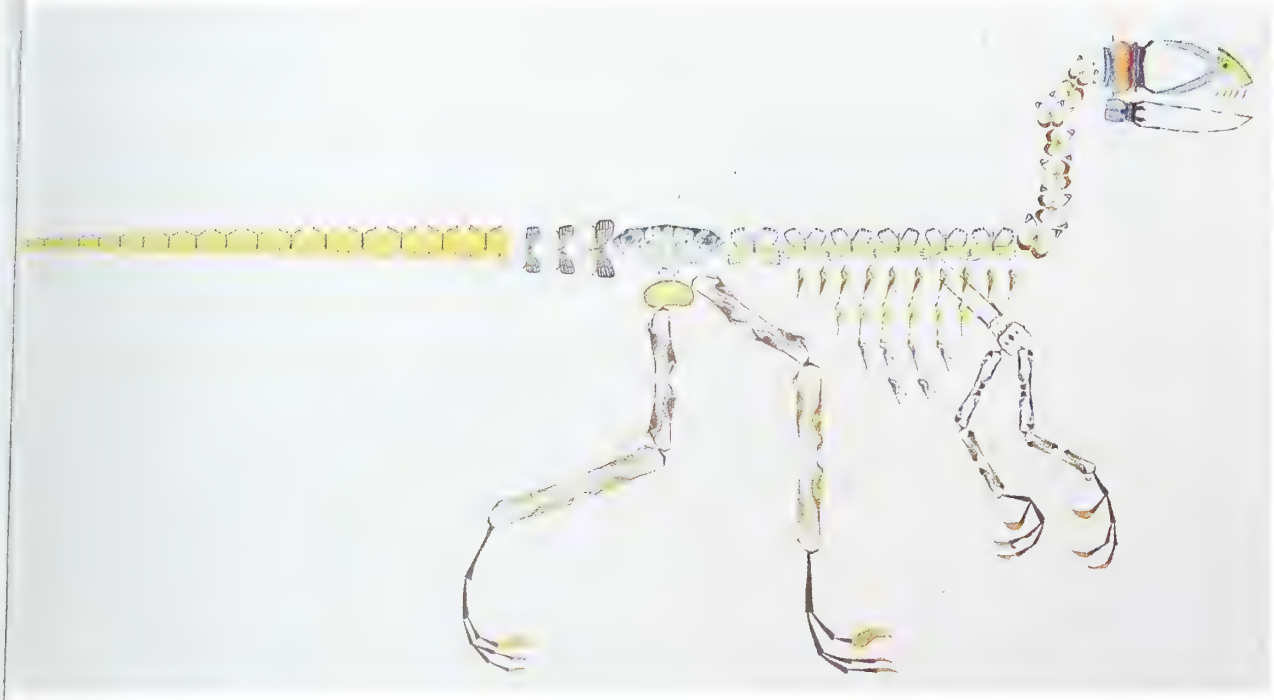
"He had not—"

"—even a donkey!"

"And he walked on ahead? It hardly seems likely."

The snow had ceased; the laughing children had run off; we walked home, brooding.

Wei-Ha came the next day, his face a withered moon above a plain black robe of Orien-



Recycled Dinosaur, *by Ben Snead, was on display last fall at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, in New York City.*

tal cut. How small he seemed. Our mayor and his secretary came also; we went through the wide front room, showing the twins' collections, and the ivory acrobat poised with his swing, carved by a relative who had been to sea in his youth and who later went off to her once more, to stay, as it happened, forever. Wei-Ha looked closely and said nothing, and at tea refused all food with a gentle smile. He asked for warm water, pulled a small leather pouch from his sleeve, and took a pinch of—we could not see what—sprinkled it into the water—we waited for smoke, flames; he merely stirred and sipped. He peered at us over the cup, his eyes dark as stones fallen in a well and watching, watching as if from a great impartial distance, and we recalled the austerity of his demeanor on stage, even as he stood amid fantastic effect.

Of course we were impatient, waiting for an event by which we could discern his greatness, and when he finally spoke in soft tones we leaned forward—would it occur now? He explained that he was recovering from a long illness; we had no doubt heard he was traveling with contortionists—they had departed when he fell ill; he was honoring this last commitment for he knew we could not, isolated as we were, find another . . . and he had fond memories of kindnesses shown him . . .

No, the hoped for moment would not occur, there at the table laden with sausages and sweetmeats, and in our midst the foreign voice ran on—and perhaps to conceal our disappointment we piled our plates high and began to eat, gobbling as if ravenous, all the while feeling a pained embarrassment, somehow connected to our ascetic visitor, so easily neglected.

And then it seemed something did happen. The mayor's hand paused—the pink-frosted cake halfway to his mouth, his lips drawn back from the large square teeth; he shook his head, returned the cake to the plate, closed the cavernous mouth, crossed his arms atop his belly, shook his head once more, and turned to his secretary: No! Expectations already had been scaled back, and back! It was a breach of contract!

Frankie and Fanny jumped in their chairs:

"But he's—"

"—sick, he's sick! We mustn't—"

"—say no, it would—"

"Enough!" shouted the mayor and in the quiet after his words came the hissing of breath drawn in, and we turned to Wei-Ha to find his dark eyes closed tight, his face crumpled, gripped by what pain we could only imagine.

So it was decided. The audience would be smaller, its members selected that afternoon by lottery. And the performance would occur not in the great drafty town hall but in our home, there in the front gallery—a turn taken not even in our boldest dreams.

Artwork courtesy the Fifth Annual Absolut Curatorial Strong Collection and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York City

There are many marvels in and upon the earth, and the twins, who had come into the world as marvels themselves (their umbilical cords, twisted as one, twined about their necks: as one infant moved forward, pushed toward the light and air, the cord tightened—this most perilous beginning salvaged by the midwife, whose skill was thereafter legendary), had determined at a young age to collect what wonders they could: they crept in the forest seeking the whole molted snakeskin, the black lady's slipper, the feather of the restless speckled hawk.

Now they spent early evening tidying, rearranging their collections to best catch the candlelight. Gently they brushed out pinions, re-pinned shimmering, translucent wings, smoothed the pages of the book.

At five minutes to midnight, one of the mayor's men blew a long note on a horn, and we took our seats. The candles at the back and sides of the room were extinguished, and then we waited for Wei-Ha.

He came not in a puff of smoke nor in a cloud but through the door like a common man—and yet not like a common man, the plain robe exchanged for one that shone green as emerald, his hands moving like a snake charmer's, his painted face showing a life we had not seen: as if years had fallen away but also as if the very bones had gained ascendancy; this was an artifice that drew from one face both infant and skull, and when he stood before us we felt a portion of our earlier shame, when we had found this magnificent guest pale, lacking.

He inclined his head slightly and opened his arms wide, turned his back to us, then turned again, and from each arm swung a pure white monkey. One clutched, in its delicate furred hands, a tiny pair of cymbals, the other a drum, and in a second they had leapt up and marched upon his arms in step, drumming a martial beat, until at the end of a phrase the cymbals fell silent and the drummer tapped a sharp, final roll; they bowed, swung back down, Wei-Ha turned, and turned back, and this time the cymbals and drum floated in air, silent. He brought his hands together, separated them, and there was nothing but the beat, one measure, one measure, one more, and then fading.

We began to applaud but he raised a hand, and we settled down, delighted he did not even require that small payment.

After the monkeys, butterflies, an egg solid as rock—a woman weighed it in her hand and tried to break it—inside of which Wei-Ha found, after crushing it with a single breath, the pearl earrings worn by that very woman, who had not noticed they were missing. "Thief!" she cried, laughing, and with a certain gallantry refused to take the earrings back, until once more the white monkeys appeared, leapt nimbly to her shoulders, and refastened the glowing drops, while the other women nervously put their hands to their ears and throats. He drew a cloud from a sleeve, and then with one gesture a light rain from the cloud, which continued to hover in the room

[Prayer]

## AGE IS WASTED ON THE YOUNG

*From the Spiritual Letters section of LibraryOnline Inc., a website that provides hundreds of letter templates that can be modified online and then printed out or emailed to friends and colleagues. This "letter written to God about growing old" is one of the samples available at www.libraryonlineinc.com.*

Dear Lord,

You know better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking that I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but you know, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains—they are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of other's pains, but help me to endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint—some of them are so hard to live with—but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of evil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected people, and give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so.

Amen.

until someone opened a window, whereupon it drifted out, producing snow, a handful of which, brought in by one of the children crowding outside, Wei-Ha turned to salt and then this salt to fire, this fire to steam.

He had entertained us before, spectacularly but at a distance, standing beneath the great proscenium arch in the town hall, aided by bustling assistants: it seems we had had, without realizing it, a sense that Wei-Ha was a master whose secrets resided somehow in the trappings, or props—in a velvet pocket perhaps, or in the arcane construction of a box or drawer. Here now, without curtains or cabinets, devoid of the darkness of the wings, so close we could have sprung up and in two paces touched him, he seemed himself an extension of his conjuring, and we wondered if he had employed the trappings of magic not to embellish his gift but to contain it, and we began to doubt his flesh.

Or did we forget our own? It was not until Wei-Ha gestured and the twins came forward that we saw the cabinets about us, all the twins' pride, were empty. This then was a part of the master's design: the butterflies, the egg, the clutch of finches, the flying beetles—all these inanimate treasures he had provoked to life. We saw, and yet the realization meant nothing; in this we were like a dreamer who says: "But this is a dream" and then must watch as the dream, itself indifferent to that knowledge, continues to unfurl.

Nothing—empty—save for one specimen: once more the dark heads bent over the book, and as they lifted their faces and the book toward him we were pierced with a treacherous, inexplicable joy. I have often wondered whether, or what, we guessed, and whether we might have stood, called out. But we sat on and watched, rapt, as Wei-Ha took the book and seemed to turn it inside out—the white leaves shimmered toward us; then drew it in—we saw a dull dense space, without color; and turned it out—a shining arc. And when he drew it back, we saw him, and the twins, the image distorted as if seen through water or waves of heat. Again and again Wei-Ha gestured, spinning out, drawing in, until it seemed the book was itself breathing like a great bellows, consuming the air we also breathed, then pushing it back, the room caught and shaken in the grip of that motion, and we gasped, and in the tumult of that vertiginous moment felt a wild unshuttered excitement.

It was some time before the room steadied. How strange to find ourselves still in our chairs, the candles burning with undiminished brightness. We looked about—there was a sense of not wanting to meet another's gaze—and then stared forward in awkward suspense, waiting for Wei-Ha to reappear and reveal the twins.

Finally, the twins' mother broke the spell. She went round and crouched near the book, which had assumed its normal proportions, and we watched her, then looked toward one another, moved into groups and whispered; soon the whispers grew to murmurs, the murmurs to shouts:

"He can't have run he's—"

"—sick, he—"

"Search the stables!"

"Under the floor!"

Through the house, courtyard, stables, town, on into the night, the day, the night.

Of course they did not find him. As for the two acolytes he took with him, our twins, there was little we could do. We watched over their mother; dipped cloth in lavender water, soothed her brow; left her when she asked to be alone. And when she was calm it was days later and we looked out the window and saw the snows had come. How silent the house was, without the twins. We bent our heads over the book, and remembered, and found nothing there. But when we looked away a flickering haunted the periphery of our vision; we looked again, and away, then back again, and now objects assembled, fugitive at first, then increasingly steady beneath our gaze: the pearl-handled pistol lost by our cousin Serge, the butcher woman's faint blond mustache, a bird setting fire to its nest, the ivory acrobat—and about these things a line like a snail's path: the trajectory of the twins' passage, and that of Wei-Ha, moving crookedly as through a labyrinth of dream.

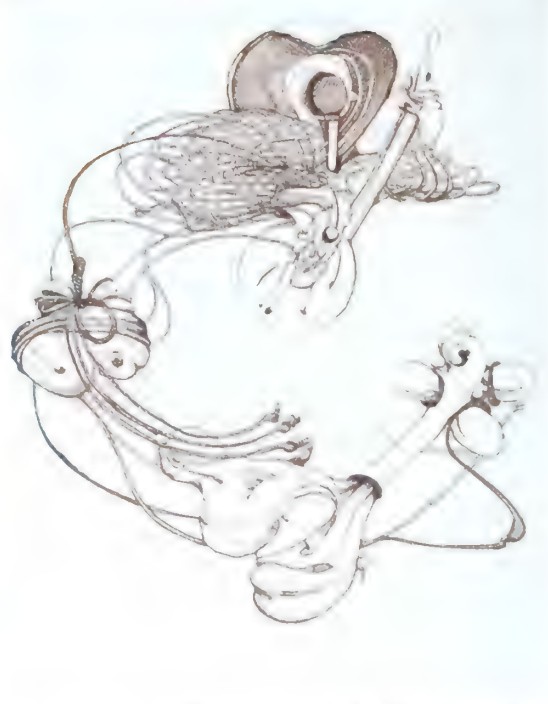
In those echoic pages we found the birds they had kept and more: lusty mice beneath a bell jar, the astringency of saffron, blue paper held with tongs and dipped into vinegar, a test of misfortune, and now as we look, the twins themselves come into view: they are climbing a hill in summer, moving through the air possessed by no one, amid the buzz of insects, and Fanny stops to scratch a knee and Frankie halts with her, and they peer down at something in the grass, or perhaps the grass itself, and then continue toward a shrub three times as high as themselves in whose lower branches a praying mantis has deposited her eggs, their foamy cases even now hardening in the air, darkening.

This was what Wei-Ha had taken, and left us. Since that time, of course, much has happened—we have grown older, and old. Still we return to the book, whose long foldings and unfoldings seem endless but, we suspect, are not.









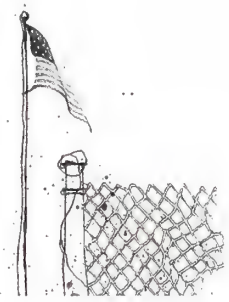
# LIE DOWN FOR AMERICA

## How the Republican Party sows ruin on the Great Plains

*By Thomas Frank*

The poorest county in America isn't in Appalachia or the Deep South. It is on the Great Plains, a region of struggling ranchers and dying farm towns, and in the election of 2000 the Republican candidate for president, George W. Bush, carried it by a majority of greater than 75 percent.*

This puzzled me when I first read about it, as it puzzles many of the people I know. For us it is the Democrats that are the party of workers, of the poor, of the weak and the victimized. Figuring this out, we think, is basic; it is part of the ABCs of adulthood. When I told a friend of mine about that impoverished High Plains county so enamored of President Bush, she was perplexed. "How can anyone who has ever worked for someone else vote Republican?" she asked. How could so many people get it so wrong?



Her question is apt; it is, in many ways, the preeminent question of our times. People getting their fundamental interests wrong is what American political life is all about. This species of derangement is the bedrock of our civic order; it is the foundation on which all else rests. This derangement has put the Republicans in charge of all three branches of government; it has elected presidents, senators, governors; it shifts the Democrats to the right and then impeaches Bill Clinton just for fun.

If you earn more than $300,000 a year, you owe a great deal to this derangement. Raise a glass sometime to those indigent High Plains Republicans as you contemplate your good fortune: It is thanks to their self-denying votes that you are no longer burdened by the estate tax, or troublesome labor unions, or meddlesome banking regulators. Thanks to the allegiance of these sons and daughters of toil you have escaped what your affluent forebears used to call "confiscatory" income-tax levels. It is thanks to them that you were able to buy two Rolexes this year instead of one and take delivery on that limited-edition Segway with the gold trim.

Or perhaps you are one of those many, many millions of average-income Americans who see nothing deranged about this at all. For you this picture of hard-times conservatism makes perfect sense, and it is the opposite phenomenon—working-class people who insist on voting for liberals—that strikes you as an indecipherable puzzlement. Maybe you see it the way the bumper sticker I spotted at a Kansas City gun show puts it:

* *I am referring to Loup County, Nebraska. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the county's per capita personal income was only $6,235 in 2002. In 2000, the poorest county was McPherson, also in Nebraska, which went for George W. Bush by more than 80 percent. On the sad phenomenon of High Plains poverty, see the study by Patricia Funk and Jon Bailey, "Trampled Dreams: The Neglected Economy of the Rural Great Plains" (Walthill, Nebr.: Center for Rural Affairs, 2000).*

*Thomas Frank is a contributing editor of* Harper's Magazine. *He is writing a book on this topic,* What's the Matter with Kansas? *which will be published by Metropolitan Books in June.*

Illustrations by Andrew Zbihlyj

[illegible] it's hard for you to remember why blue-collar people were ever Democrats in the first place. Maybe you signed up for America's war back in 1968, sick and tired of those rich kids in beads bad-mouthing the country. Or maybe Ronald Reagan brought you over, the way he talked about that sunshiny, Glenn Miller America that you remembered from the time before the world went to hell. Or maybe Bill Clinton made a Republican out of you, with his obvious contempt for non-Ivy Americans, the ones he had the nerve to order into combat even though he himself took the coward's way out when his turn came.

> VALUES MAY "MATTER MOST" TO VOTERS, BUT THEY ALWAYS TAKE A BACK SEAT TO THE NEEDS OF MONEY ONCE THE ELECTION IS WON

Nearly everyone has a conversion story of this kind that they can tell: how their dad had been a union steelworker and a stalwart Democrat, but how all their brothers and sisters started voting Republican; or how their cousin gave up on Methodism and started going to the Pentecostal church out on the edge of town; or how they themselves just got so sick of being scolded for eating meat or for wearing clothes emblazoned with the State U's Indian mascot that one day Fox News started to seem "fair and balanced" to them after all.

Welcome to the Great Backlash, a style of conservatism that is anything but complacent. Whereas earlier forms of conservatism emphasized fiscal sobriety, the backlash mobilizes voters with explosive social issues—summoning public outrage over everything from busing to un-Christian art—which it then marries to pro-business economic policies. Cultural anger is marshaled to achieve economic ends. And it is these economic achievements—not the forgettable skirmishes of the never-ending culture wars—that are the movement's greatest monuments. The backlash is what has made possible the international free-market consensus of recent years, with all the privatization, deregulation, and de-unionization that are its components. Backlash ensures that Republicans will continue to be returned to office even when their free-market miracles fail and their libertarian schemes don't deliver and their "New Economy" collapses. It makes possible the policy pushers' fantasies of "globalization" and a free-trade empire that are foisted upon the rest of the world with such self-assurance. Because some artist decides to shock the bucks by dunking Jesus in urine, the [illegible] planet must remake itself along the lin[illegible] ferred by the Republican Party, U.S.A.

The Great Backlash has made the laiss[illegible] revival possible, but this does not mean [illegible] speaks to us in the manner of the capitalist [illegible] invoking the divine right of money or d[illegible] ing that the lowly learn their place in th[illegible] chain of being. On the contrary: The ba[illegible] imagines itself as a foe of the elite, as the [illegible] of the unfairly persecuted, as a righteous [illegible] of the people on history's receiving end. T[illegible] champions today control all three branc[illegible] government matters not a whit. That its g[illegible] beneficiaries are the wealthiest people [illegible] planet does not give it pause.

In fact, backlash leaders systematically [illegible] play the politics of economics. The mover[illegible] basic premise is that culture outweighs ec[illegible] ics as a matter of public concern—that "[illegible] Matter Most, as one backlash book title has [illegible] those grounds it rallies citizens who would[illegible] have been reliable partisans of the New D[illegible] the standard of conservatism. Old-fashione[illegible] ues may count when conservatives appear [illegible] stump, but once conservatives are in offic[illegible] only old-fashioned situation they care to r[illegible] is the regimen of low wages and lax regula[illegible] Over the last three decades they have smashe[illegible] welfare state, reduced the tax burden on c[illegible] rations and the wealthy, and generally faci[illegible] ed the country's return to a nineteenth-ce[illegible] pattern of wealth distribution. Thus the pri[illegible] contradiction of the backlash: It is a working [illegible] movement that has done incalculable, his[illegible] harm to working-class people.

The leaders of the backlash may talk Chris[illegible] they walk corporate. Values may "matter m[illegible] to voters, but they always take a back seat t[illegible] needs of money once the elections are won. [illegible] is a basic earmark of the phenomenon, abso[illegible] ly consistent across its decades-long history. A[illegible] tion is never halted. Affirmative action is n[illegible] abolished. The culture industry is never force[illegible] clean up its act. Even the greatest culture-wa[illegible] of them all, Ronald Reagan, was a noto[illegible] cop-out once it came time to deliver.

One might expect this reality to vex the m[illegible] ment's true believers. Their grandstanding l[illegible] ers never produce, their fury mounts and mo[illegible] and nevertheless they turn out every two yea[illegible] return their right-wing heroes to office for a [illegible] ond, a third, a twentieth try. The trick n[illegible] ages, the illusion never wears off. *Vote* to [illegible] abortion; *receive* a rollback in capital-gains [illegible] es. *Vote* to make our country strong again[illegible] *ceive* deindustrialization. *Vote* to screw those[illegible] litically correct college professors; *rec*[illegible] electricity deregulation. *Vote* to get governm[illegible] off our backs; *receive* conglomeration

opoly everywhere from media to meatpack-
*Vote* to stand tall against terrorists; *receive* So-
Security privatization efforts. *Vote* to strike a
against elitism; *receive* a social order in
:h wealth is more concentrated than ever
re in our lifetimes, in which workers have
ı stripped of power and CEOs are rewarded in
ınner beyond imagining.

acklash theorists imagine countless conspir-
s in which the wealthy, powerful, and well-
ıected—the liberal media, the atheistic sci-
sts, the obnoxious eastern elite—pull the
ıgs and make the puppets dance. And yet the
clash itself has been a political trap so devas-
ıg to the interests of Middle America that
ı the most diabolical of string-pullers would
e had trouble dreaming it up. Here, after all,
rebellion against "the establishment" that
wound up abolishing the tax on inherited
tes. Here is a movement
ɔse response to the power
cture is to make the rich
n richer; whose answer to
undeniable degradation
/orking-class life is to lash
angrily at labor unions
liberal workplace-safety
grams; whose solution to
rise of ignorance in Amer-
is to pull the rug out from
ler public education.

Like a French Revolution
everse—one in which the
s-culottes pour down the
ets demanding more pow-
to the aristocracy—the
klash pushes the spectrum
he acceptable to the right,
the right, further to the
ht. It may never bring prayer back to the
ıools, but it has rescued all manner of
ht-wing economic nostrums from history's
ɜtbin. Having rolled back the landmark eco-
mic reforms of the sixties (the war on pover-
and those of the thirties (labor law, agricul-
al price supports, banking regulation), its
ders now turn their guns on the accomplish-
nts of the earliest years of progressivism (Wil-
ı's estate tax, Theodore Roosevelt's antitrust
easures). With a little more effort, the
backlash may well repeal the entire
twentieth century.

In the backlash imagination, America is in a
ıte of quasi-civil war pitting the unpretentious
illions of authentic Americans against the
okish, deracinated, all-powerful liberals who
n the country but are contemptuous of the
stes and beliefs of the people who inhabit it.
hen the chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1992 announced to a national TV audience that "We are America" and "those other people are not," he was merely giving new and more blunt expression to a decades-old formula. Newt Gingrich's famous description of Democrats as "the enemy of normal Americans" was just one more winning iteration of this well-worn theme.

The current installment of this fantasy is the story of "the two Americas," the symbolic division of the country that, after the presidential election of 2000, captivated not only backlashers but a sizable chunk of the pundit class. The idea found its inspiration in the map of the electoral results that year: There were those vast stretches of inland "red" space (all the networks used red to designate Republican victories), where people voted for George W. Bush, and those tiny little "blue" coastal areas, where people lived in big




cities and voted for Al Gore. On the face of it there was nothing really remarkable about these red and blue blocs, especially since in terms of the popular vote the contest was essentially a tie.

Still, many commentators divined in the 2000 map a baleful cultural cleavage, a looming crisis over identity and values. These pundits knew—before election night was over and just by looking at the map—what those two Americas represented. Indeed, the explanation was ready to go before the election even happened. The great dream of conservatives ever since the thirties has been a working-class movement that for once takes *their* side of the issues, that votes Republican and reverses the achievements of working-class movements of the past. In the starkly divided red/blue map of 2000 they thought they saw it being realized: The old Democratic regions of the South and the Great Plains were on their team now, stout blocs of uninterrupted red, while the Democrats were restricted to the old-line,

the easy snoozing flyover. Readers in the thirties, on the other hand, would have known instantly what Webb was talking about, since so many of the great political upheavals of their part of the twentieth century were launched from the territory west of the Ohio River. The region as they knew it was what gave the country Socialists like Eugene Debs, fiery progressives like Robert La Follette, and practical unionists like Walter Reuther. They might even have known that there were once Socialist newspapers in Kansas and Socialist voters in Oklahoma and Socialist mayors in Milwaukee, and that there were radical farmers across the region forever enlisting in militant agrarian organizations like the Farmers' Alliance, or the Farmer-Labor Party, or the Non-Partisan League, or the Farm Holiday Association.

Almost all of these associations have evaporated today. That the region's character has been altered so thoroughly—that so much of the Midwest now regards the welfare state as an alien imposition; that we have trouble even believing there was a time when progressives were described with adjectives like "fiery," rather than "snooty" or "bossy" or "wimpy"—has to stand as one of the great reversals in American history.

So when the electoral map of 2000 is compared with that of 1896—the year of the showdown that pitted the "great commoner," William Jennings Bryan, against the voice of business, William McKinley—a remarkable inversion is indeed evident. Bryan was a Nebraskan, a leftist, and a fundamentalist Christian, an almost unimaginable combination today, and in 1896 he swept most of the country outside the elite Northeast, which stood rock-solid for industrial capitalism. George W. Bush's advisers love to compare their man to McKinley, and armed with the map of 2000 the President's fans are able to envisage the great contest of 1896 refought with optimal results: the politics of McKinley chosen by the Middle American voters for Bryan.

From this one piece of evidence, the electoral map, the pundits simply veered off into authoritative-sounding cultural proclamation. Just by

look at the map, they reasoned, we can
ily tell that George W. Bush was the choice
plain people, the grassroots Americans wh
habited the place we know as the "heartla
region of humility, guilelessness, and, abo
stout yeoman *righteousness*. The Democrats,
other hand, were the party of the elite. L
looking at the map we could see that liberal
sophisticated, wealthy, and materialistic. W
the big cities blued themselves shamelessl
*land* knew what it was about and went Repul
by a margin in square miles of four to one.

The attraction of such a scheme for con
tives was powerful and obvious. The Red
narrative brought majoritarian legitimacy
President who had actually lost the popula
It also allowed conservatives to present their
as the philosophy of a region that Americ
even sophisticated urban ones—traditionally
erate as the repository of national virtue, a
of plain speaking and straight shooting. But
the idea coasted on, becoming a standard
ment of the media's pop-sociology repertoire
"two Americas" idea became a hook for all
ner of local think pieces (Blue Minnesota is
arated by only one thin street from Red
nesota, but my, how different those
Minnesotas are); it provided an easy tool for
textualizing the small stories (Red Ameri
love a certain stage show in Vegas, but Blue A
icans don't) or for spinning the big stories (
Walker Lindh, the American who fought fo
Taliban, was from California and therefore
flection of Blue-state values); and it justified
less *USA Today*–style contemplations of wh
Americans really are, meaning mainly inves
tions of the usual—what we Americans lik
drive, to watch, to eat, and so forth.

Red America, these stories typically impl
a mysterious place whose thoughts and va
are essentially foreign to society's masters. Like
"Other America" of the sixties or the "Forgo
Men" of the thirties, its vast stretches are t
cally ignored by the dominant class—that is
people who write the sitcoms and screen
and the stories in glossy magazines, all of wh
according to the conservative comment
Michael Barone, simply "can't imagine livi
such places." Which is particularly unfair of th
impudent even, because Red America is in
the *real* America, the part of the country w
reside, as a story in the Canadian *National Pos*
it, "the original values of America's foundi

The Gore-voting people of the Blue st
meanwhile, were dismissed with what we
call the latte libel: the suggestion that libe
are identifiable by their tastes and consu
preferences and that these tastes and pre
ences reveal the essential arrogance and
eignness of liberalism. And since many of

dits who were hailing the virtues of the states—pundits, remember, who were conatives and who supported George W. n—actually, physically lived in Blue states went for Gore, the rules of this idiotic e allowed them to present the latte libel in elevated language of the confession. David oks, who has since made a career out of ecting the liberal stereotype onto the map, to the pages of *The Atlantic* to admit on alf of *everyone who lives in a Blue zone* that are all snobs, toffs, wusses, ignoramuses, utterly out of touch with the authentic life he people:

> We in the coastal metro Blue areas read more oks and attend more plays than the people in he Red heartland. We're more sophisticated and smopolitan—just ask us about our alumni trips to hina or Provence, or our interest in Buddhism. ut don't ask us, please, what life in Red America like. We don't know. We don't know who Tim Laaye and Jerry B. Jenkins are. . . . We don't know hat James Dobson says on his radio program, which listened to by millions. We don't know about eba and Travis. . . . Very few of us know what goes n in Branson, Missouri, even though it has seven illion visitors a year, or could name even five ASCAR drivers. . . . We don't know how to shoot r clean a rifle. We can't tell a military officer's rank y looking at his insignia. We don't know what soy eans look like when they're growing in a field.

e is tempted to dismiss Brooks's grand generations by rattling off the many ways in which y're wrong: by pointing out that the top three bean producers—Illinois, Iowa, and Minota—were in fact Blue states; or by listing the ny military bases located on the coasts; or by ting that when it came time to build a SCAR track in Kansas, the county that won honor was one of only two in the state that t for Gore. Average per capita income in that he lonely Blue county, I might as well add, is ,000, which places it well below Kansas and naal averages, and far below what would be rered for the putting on of elitist or cosmopoliairs of any kind.

t's pretty much a waste of time, however, to alogue the contradictions and tautologies

*onsider what we might call the snowmobile dilemma id Brooks insists that one can trace the Red state/Blue divide by determining whether a person does outdoor vities with motors (the good old American way) or with- (the pretentious Blue state way). "We [Blue staters ble] cross-country ski; they snowmobile." And yet in wsweek's take on the Blue/Red divide (it appeared in the e for January 1, 2001), a "town elder" from Red Amer can be found railing against people who drive snowmo s precisely because they signal big-city contempt for the all-town values" of Bush Country!*

*n the selection printed above, David Brooks tosses off*

and huge, honking errors blowing round in a media flurry like this. The tools being used are the blunt instruments of propaganda, not the precise metrics of sociology. The "two Americas" commentators showed no interest in examining the mysterious inversion of the nation's politics in any systematic way. Their aim was simply to bolster the stereotypes using whatever tools were at hand: to cast the Democrats as the party of a wealthy, pampered, arrogant elite that lives as far as it can from real Americans; and to represent Republicanism as the faith of the hard-working common people of the heartland, an expression of their unpretentious, all-American ways, just like country music and NASCAR. At this pursuit they largely succeeded. By 2003 the conservative claim to the Midwest was so uncontested that Fox News

THE RED-STATE NARRATIVE LENT MAJORITARIAN LEGITIMACY TO A PRESIDENT WHO HAD ACTUALLY LOST THE POPULAR VOTE

*a few names from the conservative political world as though they were uncontroversial folk heroes out in the hinterland, akin to country-music stars or favorite cartoonists. But the real reason liberals don't know much about James Dobson or Tim LaHaye is not because they are out of touch with America but because both of these men are ideologues of the right. Those who listen to Dobson's radio program or buy LaHaye's novels, suffused as they are with Bircher-style conspiracy theory, tend to be people who agree with them, people who voted for Bush in 2000.*

*The central, basic assertion of the Blue-state/Red-state literature is that the Democrats are the party of the elite while the Republicans are the party of average, unpretentious Americans. Accordingly, David Brooks asserts in his* Atlantic *essay that "upscale areas everywhere" voted for Gore in 2000. As a blanket statement about the rich, this is not even close to correct. Bush was in fact the hands-down choice of corporate America: According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Bush raised more in donations than Gore in each of ten industrial sectors, the only sector in which Gore came out ahead was "labor." In fact, Bush raised more money from wealthy contributors than any other candidate in history, a record he then broke in 2003.*

*Now is Brooks's statement valid even within its limited parameters. When he says "upscale areas everywhere" voted for Gore, he gives Chicago's North Shore as an example of what he means. And yet, when you look up the actual 2000 voting returns for those areas of the North Shore known for being "upscale," you find that reality looks very different from the stereotype. Lake Forest, the definitive and the richest North Shore burb, chose the Republican, as it almost always does, by a whopping 70 percent. Winnetka and Kenilworth, the other North Shore suburbs known for their upscaliness, went for Bush by 59 percent and 64 percent, respectively.*

*And there were obviously many other "upscale areas" where Bush prevailed handily: Fairfax County, Virginia (suburban D.C.), Cobb County, Georgia (suburban Atlanta), DuPage County, Illinois (more of suburban Chicago), St. Charles County, Missouri (suburban St. Louis), and Orange County, California (the veritable symbol of upscale suburbia), to name but a few.*

launched a talk show dealing in culture-

Reading through the "two Americas" liter-

A Red stater is humble. In fact, humility, according to reigning journalistic myth, the signature quality of Red America, just as it was one of the central themes of George W. Bush's presidential campaign. "In Red America the self is small," teaches David Brooks. "People declare in a million ways, 'I am normal.'" "Bush Red is a simpler place," concurs John Podhoretz, a former speechwriter for Bush the Elder, after watching people at play in Las Vegas; it's a land "where people mourn the death of NASCAR champion Dale Earnhardt, root lustily for their teams, go to church and find comfort in old-fashioned verities."




Here is how Missouri farmer Blake Hurst put it, proudly, in *The American Enterprise* magazine:

> Most Red Americans can't deconstruct post-modern literature, give proper orders to a sommelier picked out a Cabernet with aftertones of hoof-rot or quote prices from the Abercrombie and Fitch catalog. But we can raise great children, write our own houses, make beautiful and delicious meals with our two hands, talk casually and comfortably about God, repair a small engine, recognize a good maple sugar tree, tell you the histories of our townsmen and the hopes of our neighbors, shoot [illegible] without fear, calculate the bearing load of a roof, grow our own asparagus

On the Blue side of the great virtue divide, Brooks reports, "the self is more [illegible]." This species of American [illegible] in the field by their constant worry. "They think they are so damn smart," Podhoretz (a former Republican speechwriter, remember) [illegible] that "we" Blue staters "cannot live without [illegible]," which he means mocking everything that [illegible] es our path, because "we" foolishly believe [illegible] sides moral and moral confusion are sign[illegible] higher consciousness." Brooks, who has else[illegible] ascribed the decline of the Democratic Part[illegible] "snobbery," mocks Blue staters for eating [illegible] cy restaurants and shopping in small, prete[illegible] stores instead of at Wal-Mart, retailer to th[illegible] America. He actually finds a poll in whic[illegible] percent of liberals confess, "I like to show [illegible] which he then tops with another poll in wh[illegible] percent of liberals describe themselves as "[illegible] lectuals." Such admissions, in this compan[illegible] like calling yourself a mind-twisting Comm[illegible]

**A Red stater, meanwhile, is reverent.** [illegible] were repeatedly reminded after the 2000 elec[illegible] Red-state people have a better relationship [illegible] God than the rest of us do. They are "obser[illegible] tradition-minded, moralistic," in Michael Ba[illegible] formulation. Liberals o[illegible] coasts, meanwhile, are s[illegible] be "unobservant, lil[illegible] tion-minded, relativistic [illegible]

But don't worry: **A [illegible] stater is courteous, k[illegible] cheerful.** They may be [illegible] gious, but they aren't [illegible] pushy about it. The pe[illegible] David Brooks encounter[illegible] one county in Pennsylv[illegible] declined to discuss abor[illegible] with him, from which he [illegible] cludes that "potentially [illegible] troversial subjects are o[illegible] played down" throughout [illegible] America. Even the preac[illegible] he met there are careful t[illegible] spect the views of oth[illegible] These fine people "don't [illegible] public scolds." They are easygoing believers, [illegible] interested in taking you on in a culture war. D[illegible] be frightened.

**A Red stater is loyal.** This is the part of [illegible] country that fills the Army's ranks and defe[illegible] the flag against all comers. While [illegible] European-minded know-it-alls of Bluel[illegible] waited only a short time after 9/11 to c[illegible] mence blaming America for the tragedy, [illegible] story goes, sturdy Red staters stepped forw[illegible] unhesitatingly to serve their country one m[illegible] time. For Blake Hurst of Missouri, this spe[illegible] relationship with the military is both a ma[illegible] of pride ("Red America is never redder than [illegible] our bloodiest battlefields") and a grievanc[illegible] you know, the usual one, the one you saw [illegible] *Rambo*, the one where all the cowards of [illegible] coasts stab the men of Redland in the b[illegible] during the Vietnam War.

it above all, **a Red stater is a regular, n-home working stiff,** whereas Blue staters are ys some sort of pretentious paper-shuffler. In-, the entire idea that the United States is nations" defined by social rank was an in-ion of the labor movement and the histori-ft. The agrarian radicals of the 1890s used the nations" image to distinguish between "pro-rs" and "parasites," or simply "the robbers he robbed," as "Sockless" Jerry Simpson, the t congressman from Kansas, liked to put it. ay we've got all the disillusionment, all the re-nent, but none of the leftism. "Rural Amer-s pissed," a small-town Pennsylvania man a reporter from *Newsweek*. Explaining why he his neighbors voted for George Bush, he said: ese people are tired of moral decay. They're of everything being wonderful on Wall Street terrible on Main Street." Let me repeat that: y're voting *Republican* in order to *get even with Street*.

lake Hurst, the Missouri farmer who is so d of being humble, points out in *The Ameri-Enterprise* that "the work we [Red staters] do be measured in bushels, pounds, shingles ed, and bricks laid, rather than in the fussy ments that make up office employee reviews." there's something fishy about Hurst's claim to mantle of workerist righteousness, something nd the immediate fishiness of a magazine or-rily given to assailing unions and saluting the v now printing such a fervent celebration of -collar life. Just being familiar with the phys-world shouldn't automatically make you a nber of the beaten-down producer class any e than does a taste for meat loaf or NASCAR. eed, elsewhere Hurst describes himself not as mple farmer but as the co-owner of a family ness overseeing the labors of a number of em-yees, employees whom, he confides, he and family "don't pay high wages." This man may in the sticks, but he is about as much a -collar toiler as is Al Gore himself.

'erhaps that is why Hurst is so certain that ough there is obviously a work-related divide ween the two Americas—separating them Hurst's humble, producer America and the rals' conceited, parasite America—it isn't the ry divide that Sockless Simpson yelled about, sort of divide between workers and bosses t might cause problems for readers of *The erican Enterprise*. "Class-consciousness isn't a blem in Red America," he assures them: people "perfectly happy to be slightly overweight d] a little underpaid."

**Class doesn't matter to the noble proletarians Bush country.** This is a verdict repeated vir-lly without fail throughout the "two Americas" rature, often only a few short sentences after author has finished mocking rich Blue staters for their fancy cars, or their snob coffee, or their expensive nannies, or their ignorance of soybeans. Barone: "The divide is not economic, but cultural." Podhoretz: "The divide is not racial or economic." Brooks: "People in Franklin County [his microcosm of Red America] have no class resentment or class consciousness." A small-town newspaper editor tells him that people hereabouts are "really into the free market"; other "locals" are reported to stare at him blankly when he asks if they resent those who have done well in the New Economy; and Brooks eventually concludes that worrying about the problems faced by the working class is yet another deluded affectation of the Blue-state rich.

> "IN RED AMERICA THE SELF IS SMALL," TEACHES DAVID BROOKS. ON THE BLUE SIDE, "THE SELF IS MORE COMMONLY LARGE"

Thinking about class in terms of a hierarchy, where some people occupy more exalted positions than others, Brooks continues, is "Marxist" and presumably illegitimate. The correct model, he suggests, is a high school cafeteria, segmented into self-chosen taste-clusters like "nerds, jocks, punks, bikers, techies, druggies, God Squadders," and so on. We choose where we want to sit and whom we want to mimic and what class we want to belong to the same way we choose hairstyles or TV shows or extracurricular activities.

As a description of the way society works this is preposterous: Even by high school, most of us know that we won't be able to choose our station in life the way we choose a soda pop or even the way we choose our friends. But as a clue into the deepest predilections of the backlash mind, Brooks's scheme is a revelation.

What divides Americans is *authenticity*, not something hard and ugly like economics. While liberals commit endless acts of hubris—consuming show-off products, driving ostentatious European cars, and trying to reform the world—the humble people of the Red states go about their unpretentious business, eating down-home foods, vacationing in the Ozarks, whistling while they work, feeling comfortable about who they are, and knowing they are secure under the watch of George W. Bush, a man they love as one of their own.

For as long as America loves authenticity, my home state of Kansas is going to be symbolically preeminent. Whatever the standard for measuring salt-of-the-earthness happens to be at the moment—the WPA social realism of the thirties or the Red-state theories of today's conservatives—Kansas is going to rank high. It is the exact center of the continental United States, the

the heartland, the roots of the grass, the Red-

Kansas is what New York City is not: a [illegible] less, straight-talking truth-place where people [illegible] rhythms of the seasons. "I could live [illegible] ay!" Ann Coulter exclaimed to an interviewer in New York.' "It's like my favorite place in the world. Oh, I think it is so great out there. Well, that's America. It's the opposite of this town. They're Americans, they're so great, they're rooting for Amer ica. I mean, there's so much [illegible]"

Coulter is embracing a literary myth of long standing when she enthuses [illegible] like Peoria or Muncie, Kansas figures in literature and film as a stand-in for the nation as a whole, the distilled essence of who we are. "The Kansan," wrote John Gunther in 1947, is "the most average of all Americans, a kind of common denominator for the entire continent." Kansas is "Midway, USA"; it's the setting for countless Depression-era documentary photographs; it's the home of the bright boy in the mailroom who wants to be a player on Wall Street. It's where Dorothy wants to return. It's where Superman grows up.

In politics, where Americans worship at the shrine of the unaffected common man, averageness allows all Kansans to present themselves as something of an aristocracy. Even bankers and oilmen, if they come from Kansas, carry with them the coveted authenticity of the real American. Thus Senator Sam Brownback, a member of one of the wealthiest families in the state and a stalwart friend of the CEO class, refers to himself on the floor of Congress as a "farmboy from Parker, Kansas." Thus Bob Dole, that consummate Washington insider, opened his 1996 presidential campaign by complaining that "our leaders have grown too isolated from places like Topeka [embarrassed by the values here."

But nice warm averageness has not always been the framing myth here. A century ago the favorite stereotype of Kansas was not as the land of normality but as the freak state. The place crawled with religious fanatics, crackpot demagogues, and alarming hybrids of the two, such as the murderous abolitionist John Brown, who is generally regarded as the state's patron saint, and the rabid prohibitionist Carry A. Nation, who expressed her distaste for liquor by smashing saloons with a hatchet. Kansas was a violent and a radical and maybe even a crazy place both by nature and by the circumstances of its founding. The state was

[illegible] of Johnson County, Kansas. Today about a third of the

initially settled by eastern abolitionist [illegible] settlers who came there to block Missouri from moving westward—in other words, to c tain the "slave power" by armed force; before l the unique savagery of the border war they fou Kansas is in headlines around the world. Do Chicago and Abilene, famed for picturesque cowt homicides, are found there as well, as are a g proportion of the nation's tornadoes and, in twentieth century, its dust storms, which oblit ated farms and carried the topsoil of the entire up and off into the wild blue yonder. Early accou of the state even tell of settlers driven insane the constant howling of the wind.

The most famous freak-out of them all w Populism, one of the first great American le movements. Populism tore through other sta as well—wailing all across Texas, the South, the West in the 1890s—but Kansas was the pl that really distinguished itself by its enthusias Driven to the brink of ruin by years of bad pric debt, and deflation, the state's farmers came gether in huge meetings where homegrown tr blemakers like Mary Elizabeth Lease exhort them to "raise less corn and more hell." The r icalized farmers marched through the small tow in day-long parades, raging against what th called the "money power." They saw their mov ment as a sort of revelation, a moment when entire generation of "Kansas fools" figured that they'd been lied to all their lives.

Today the two myths are one. Kansas may the land of averageness, but it is a freaky, milita outraged averageness. People in suburban Kan City vituperate against the sinful cosmopolit elite of New York and Washington, D.C.; peop in rural Kansas vituperate against the sinful co mopolitan elite of Topeka and suburban Kan City. Survivalist supply shops sprout in neig borhood strip malls. People send Christmas ca urging their friends to look on the bright side Islamic terrorism, since the Rapture is now cle ly at hand.

Under the state's simple blue flag are gather today the most flamboyant assortment of crank conspiracists, and calamity howlers the Repub has ever seen. The Kansas school board dra the guffaws of the world for purging references macro-evolution from state science standard Cities large and small across the state still hold o against water fluoridation, while one tiny hamle takes the additional step of requiring firearms every home. A prominent female politician e presses public doubts about the wisdom of wo n's suffrage, while another pol proposes that t state sell off the Kansas Turnpike in order solve its budget crisis. Impoverished inhabitan of the state's most scenic area fight with fanat cal determination to prevent a National Pa from opening up in their neighborhood, whi

Rails-to-Trails program, regarded everywhere in the union as a harmless scheme for famin, is reviled in Kansas as an infernal design he rights of property owners. Operation Reselects Wichita as the stage for its great ofve against abortion, calling down 30,000 ying fundamentalists on the city, witnessing blocking traffic and chaining themselves to es. A preacher from Topeka travels the naadvising Americans to love God's holy hate, ing up wherever a gay person has been in the s to announce that "God Hates Fags."

this is the place where America goes looking ts national soul, then this is where America that its soul, after stewing in the primal rement of the backlash, has gone all sour and ng. If Kansas is the concentrated essence of nality, then here is where we can see the de-ed gradually become normal, where we look that handsome, confident, reassuring, American face—class president, quarterback, des scholar, bond trader, builder of industry—and realize that we are staring into the eyes of a lunatic.

According to the backlash vision of Amer-as it's supposed to be, people in places like sas are part of one big authentic family, bask-in the easy solidarity of patriotism, hard work, the universal ability to identify soybeans in ld. But of course this isn't the case. All over erica, in the Red states as well as the Blue, dif-nt communities support different industries experience dramatically different fates. And Kansas, true to its reputation as a microcosm America, you can find each of the basic ele-nts of the American economic mix. In the lthy Kansas City suburbs of Johnson County, eative" white-collar types develop business tegies over lattes. In Wichita, unionized e-collar workers manufacture airplanes. Way west in Garden City, low-wage immigrant kers kill cows. And in between, farmers strug-to make a living on the most fertile and pro-tive land in the world.

In 2003, just as the *affaires* Enron and World-m were enlightening the nation about the mis-ef made by its CEO class, so three similar cor-ate disasters, on a smaller scale, were teaching nsans the same lessons about their own, home-wn elites—and, incidentally, about the true ure of the economic climate that conservatism created. Each of the three cases, like the larg-candals of Enron and WorldCom, involved a asi-public utility whose leadership had taken g pulls from the bubbling bong of New Econ-y theory. At each one the bosses, always her-ed as geniuses, had invented elaborate plans for eing themselves from the humdrum of public vice and setting out to mulct the world—and in each case these plans collapsed for all the usual, predictable reasons, while workers and customers screamed and mom and pop shareholders discovered they weren't going to retire in Hawaii after all.

In the windblown city of Topeka, the tale concerns the state's largest power company, an outfit that once bore the humble name Western Resources. Humility, though, was not to be Western's destiny. When this outfit looked in the mirror, it saw a *player*. So after almost a century spent playing the boring, regulated utility game, in the mid-nineties Western brought to Topeka one David Wittig, a flashy mergers-and-acquisitions man from Salomon Brothers, the Wall Street brokerage house, and set out to do some merging and acquiring, preferably in fields not subject to state regulation. The company even proposed a deal at one point in which the debt piled up in all these corporate adventures would stay with the plodding public utility back in Topeka, where those plodding Kansas ratepayers could pay it off, while Wittig himself would run the sexy unregulated acquisitions. You know the routine: Socialize the risk, privatize the profits. Along the road to this moment of enlightenment the organization picked up a "chief strategic officer," a stable of company jets, and a new name: Westar.

KANSAS MAY BE THE LAND OF AVERAGENESS, BUT IT IS A FREAKY, MILITANT, OUTRAGED AVERAGENESS

Westar never quite made it to player status: Its acquisitions turned out to be ill advised, and shares in the company, which are widely held in Kansas, fell 73 percent from their 1998 highs. Wittig himself, however, became Topeka's player in chief. He continued to pull down millions of dollars in compensation even while the company's share price plummeted and employees were laid off to reduce costs. Wittig routinely flew to Europe and the Hamptons on company jets; he spent $6.5 million decorating the company's executive suite to plans drawn up by Marc Charbonnet, a celebrated New York interior designer; he even bought the old mansion of hometown hero Alf Landon and had it conspicuously renovated by this same Charbonnet. When Wittig finally left the company in 2002, thanks to an embarrassing but unrelated money-laundering charge, local headlines screamed that he might walk away with some $42.5 million *more* in cumulative compensation.

Just across the state line in Missouri, a similar story was unfolding. This one involved a power company whose original, unassuming name had been Missouri Public Service ... which it had upgraded to UtiliCorp, and then, breaking the surly bonds of meaning altogether, to Aquila. The idea

gurus. At Aquila the

stages of disaster: the bonds downgraded to junk, the massive layoffs, the share price plummeting 96 percent, and the public revelation that Kelnar Green had pulled down $21.6 million during the years of the collapse while Robert took home $19 million, plus an additional $7.6 million severance package when he walked away from the wreckage. Let the regulators clean it up.

Then there is Sprint, the familiar provider of cell-phone and long-distance service, which started life as a small-town Kansas phone company called United Telecommunications. The free-market revolution of the nineties ballooned this sleepy local outfit into a telecom superpower, a titan in the most fabled New Economic field of them all. By 1999, Sprint was the largest employer in the Kansas City area and was building a colossal corporate campus in the Johnson County suburb of Overland Park that would incorporate 3.9 million square feet of office space, 16 parking garages, and its own zip code. This was typical of the industry. In the world of the telecoms, everything was bigger. The sums pocketed by those on the winning side of this great capitalist awakening were beyond comprehension, while the rhetoric buoying them up was otherworldly, awestruck, utopian—remember? The abolition of distance. The "visionary" CEOs. The "telecosm." Unfortunately, all that money and all that idolatry encouraged what now seems to have been a staggering amount of fraud and overconstruction.

On a different level stood Sprint. Here the

City native beloved by business journalists. Esrey's

The national media turned somersaults saluting Esrey for engineering the triumph. What

heutenants were granted stupendous helpi

and Ronald LeMay, his right-hand m

whether regulators allowed the merger t

Kansas Citians were stunned. Not so muc

the usual optimism by the prospect of the

largest employer packing up and disappear

The blow was especially inconceivable in

smiling suburb of Overland Park, where the

porate way is almost a religion and where Spri

massive "campus" was nearing completion. W

these the wages of "leadership," of "excellen

of deregulation"? Would the suburb's southe

reaches, which had been redesigned to please

telecom giant, now become a New Economy gh

town? Who would fill those parking garages,

up the value of those gated communities, play

all those designer golf courses?

As we all know, federal regulators nixed t

deal, saving Overland Park's Republican ass.

rest and his posse still got their paper millions,

per their plan. But between late 1999 and t

summer of 2002, Sprint shareholders saw the v

ue of their holdings shrivel by 90 percent as t

telecom rapture gave way to reality. By the b

ginning of 2003, Sprint had laid off more th

17,000 workers. WorldCom, meanwhile, co

fessed to accounting fraud on a scale previous

unknown and then went bankrupt. The final a

came in February 2003, when the tax shelters

which Esrey and LeMay had stashed their lo

were called into question by the IRS. The two,

was revealed, had never sold the shares they r

ceived back in 1999, and now they were liable f

a bubble-era tax bill in a distinctly austere tim

Sprint responded to their plight b

them.

At the time of their corporate stardom, Bi

Esrey of Sprint and Bob Green of Aquila bot

lived in Mission Hills, Kansas, a small suburb

Kansas City. David Wittig, for his part, grew u

in the next suburb to the south, while Rona

LeMay lived a few blocks to the east.

Out-of-town papers typically refer to the Kans

City "business community" as "close-knit." Dav

Brooks might say that Kansas City's business own

ers are just folks who like to sit together in life

cafeteria at what happens to be a very small, ver

well-stocked table. The correct term for them

however, is "elite." Mission Hills is a graphic i

lustration of what elites are about. Its two squar

miles of rolling, landscaped exquisiteness house

population of about 3,600 with a median annu

household income of $188,821, making it by fa

the richest town in Kansas and, indeed, one of th

richest in the country. But to call it a "town

although technically correct, is misleading

on Hills has three country clubs and a church no businesses of any kind. Its population is t the same as that of the two blocks surding my apartment in Chicago. It doesn't buses, commuter trains, or even proper sides, in most places. What it has are mansions, ern and colonial, whimsical and sober, enced in vast, carefully maintained lawns that astefully over the hills to the horizon.

When my family moved to Mission Hills at ail end of the bull market of the sixties, it was urb where doctors and lawyers rubbed elbows CEOs; where one found Pontiacs and ridewn mowers and driveway basketball courts even the occasional ranch house with an ast roof. There were also, of course, the origiinhabitants whose grand old houses were now rgrown with vines and invisible from the et thanks to shrubbery and weeds that had neglected for years. In their picturesque dethese dark palaces became a source of morbid ination to my brothers and me in the troubled enties: Even as children knew these houses were s of a dead past, a time n people had servants and leners and hand-built cars. Nobody mows his own n in Mission Hills anyre. Every time I paid a visluring the nineties, it ned another of the more dest houses in our neighhood had been torn down l replaced by a much largdifice, a three-story stone iteau, say, bristling with ets and porches and dorm- and gazebos and a ee-car garage. The dark old aces from the twenties outed spiffy new slate roofs, maculately tailored gars, remote-controlled driveway gates, and some- entire new wings.




These changes are of course not unique to Mission Hills. What has gone on there is normal in freakishness. You can observe the same changes Shaker Heights, or La Jolla, or Winnetka, or n Coulter's hometown of New Canaan, Conticut. They reflect the simplest and hardest of nomic realities. The fortunes of Mission Hills and fall in inverse relation to the fortunes of linary working people. When workers are pow- taxes are high and labor is expensive (as in e case from World War II until the late sevties), the houses built here are smaller, the s domestic, the servants rare, and the overwn look fashionable in gardening circles. ople read novels about eccentric English aristocrats trapped in a democratic age, sighing sadly for their lost world.

When workers are weak, taxes are down, and labor is cheap (as in the twenties and again today), Mission Hills coats itself in shimmering raiments of gold and green. Now the stock returns are plush, the bonus packages fat, the servants affordable, and the suburb finds that the baronial life isn't dead after all. It builds new additions and new fountains and new Italianate porches overlooking Olympian flower gardens maintained by shifts of laborers. People read books about the glory of empire. The kids get Porsches or SUVs when they turn sixteen; the houses with asphalt roofs discreetly disappear; the wings that were closed off are triumphantly reopened, and all is restored to its former grandeur.

Growing up in Mission Hills you quickly learn the boundaries and customs of the local notables: the local prep school attended by all the CEOs' kids, the snob colleges they all plan to attend in a few years, the family businesses they stand to inherit, the private police forces they maintain. You also learn that many of your rich friends' dads are in prison. Epidemic white-collar crime is the silent partner of the suburb's contentment, the ugly companion of its tranquil domesticity and the earnest flattery of its courtiers. In addition to disgraced CEOs like Esrey and Green, Mission Hills is the home of numerous smaller-scale thieves, embezzlers, tax evaders, real-estate frauds, and check forgers. The prominence of the criminal element here is likely related to Kansas's unlimited homestead exemption, which allows those declaring bankruptcy to keep their residence. Naturally people preparing to go under wanted the priciest house available, and thus Mission Hills became a magnet for the legally challenged from all across the region. That, plus the borderline criminality of

he area around Garden City is a showplace of
strialized agriculture: vast farms raise nothing
feed corn despite the semi-arid climate; gi-
ic rolling irrigation devices pump water from
quifer and make this otherwise unthinkable
possible; feedlots the size of cities transform
corn into cow flesh; and windowless concrete
ghterhouses squat silently on the outskirts of
n, harvesting the final product. Take a drive
ough the countryside here and you will see no
s, no picturesque old windmills or bridges or
n buildings, and almost no people. When the
ifer dries up, as it someday will—its millions
ears of collected rainwater spent in just a few
ades—you will see even less out here.

One thing you do see, on the outskirts of town,
the trailer-park cities, dilapidated and un-
ed and rubbish-strewn, that house a large part
Garden City's workforce. Confronted with
he of the most advanced union-avoidance
tegies ever conceived by the mind of busi-
s man, these people receive mediocre wages for
ng what is statistically the most dangerous
k in industrial America. Thanks to the rapid
nover at the slaughterhouses, few of them re-
ve health or retirement benefits. The "social
ts" of supporting them—education, health
e, law enforcement—are "externalized," as
scholarly types put it, pushed off onto the
ns themselves, or onto church groups and
fare agencies, or onto the countries from which
workers come. With constant speedup of the
e and with the cold temperatures of the plant,
angry worker told me, "After ten years, people
lk like they're sixty or seventy years old."

This is economic growth, yes, but it is a species
growth that makes a city less wealthy and less
althy as its population increases. Viewed from
ssion Hills, it is a social order that delivers
aint slate roofs, copper gutters, and gurgling
ntains in tasteful traffic islands; viewed from
rden City, it is an order that brings injury and
fection and death by a hundred forms of degra-
tion: rusting playgrounds for the kids, shabby
caying schools, a lifetime of productiveness
ne in a few decades, and depleted groundwater,
o. The good people of Mission Hills remain
faced by all this. They may be too polite to
y it aloud, but they know that poverty rocks.

> Poverty is profitable. Poverty makes stocks go up and labor come down.

I have heard people justify what goes on in
arden City by reasoning that, well, it's better
an what's gone on everywhere else in rural
ansas. It's better than having no economy at all.

Walk down the main street of just about any
rm town in the state and you know immediately
hat they're talking about. This is a civilization
the early stages of irreversible decay. Main Streets here are vacant, almost as a rule; their grandiose stone facades are crumbling and covered up with plywood—rotting plywood, usually, itself simply hung and abandoned fifteen years ago or whenever it was that Wal-Mart came to town.

More than two thirds of Kansas counties lost population between 1980 and 2000, some by as much as 25 percent. I am told that there are entire towns in the western part of the state getting by on Social Security: No one is left there but the aged. There are no doctors, no shoe stores. Kansas dwindles in significance with each passing decade as its congressional delegation and electoral vote are steadily whittled away.

The town where this feeling of dissipation struck me most powerfully was Emporia, a place once famous as the home of the author and newspaperman William Allen White. In our grandparents' day, White was a nationally known figure, a confidant of presidents, a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, and the unofficial spokesman of small-town America. White's signature literary offering, at least in his early days, was the droll vignette of village life; portraits of a Middle America that was easygoing and contented, industrious, tidy, crime-free, and wise in its humility. All that it demanded of the world was a chance to work hard, play fair, and show 'em what we were made of here in the heartland.

Here is what I saw in the two hours that I wandered around Emporia on an October day some ninety-eight years after William Allen White published *In Our Town:* houses made of painted particleboard; a facade on Commercial Street composed of untreated two-by-fours, nailed one next to the other; imposing brick homes with every window frame empty and grass three feet high in the yard; tumbledown apartment buildings with sprayed-on stucco and peeling veneer; bungalows with porches in mid-collapse and flimsy plastic wrap instead of glass; prefabricated steel utility buildings interspersed with residences; stone-slab sidewalks grown so craggy and broken they can't be used; a rain gutter jutting from a house like a bone from a broken arm; an air conditioner abandoned in the middle of a weedy lawn. And wafting faintly above it all, as if from the PA system at some nearby public swimming pool, the eternal classic rock of the 1970s: Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, Rush.

There's a reason you probably haven't heard much about this aspect of the heartland. This kind of blight can't be easily blamed on the usual suspects like government or counterculture or high-hat urban policy. The villain that did this to my home state wasn't the Supreme Court or Lyndon Johnson, showering dollars on the poor or putting criminals back on the street. The culprit is the conservatives' beloved free-market capitalism, a system that, at its most unrestrained,

to the right, further to the right. Strip today's farmer of their job security and they head out to become registered Republicans. Push them off their land and the next thing you know they're protesting in front of abortion clinics. Squander their life savings on manicures for the CEO and there's a good chance they'll join the John Birch Society. But ask them about the remedies their ancestors proposed—unions, antitrust laws, public ownership—and you might as well be referring to the days when knighthood was in flower.

Let us pause for a moment and gaze across this landscape of dysfunction. A state is spectacularly ill served by the Reagan-Bush stampede of deregulation, privatization, and laissez-faire. It sees its countryside depopulated, its towns disintegrate, its cities stagnate—and its wealthy enclaves sparkle, behind their remote-controlled security gates. The state erupts in revolt, making headlines around the world with its bold defiance of convention. But what do its revolutionaries demand? More of the very measures that have brought ruination on them and their neighbors in the first place.

This is not just the mystery of Kansas; this is the mystery of America, the historical shift that has made it all possible.

In Kansas the shift is more staggering than elsewhere, simply because it has been so decisive, so extreme. The people who were once radical are now reactionary. Although they speak today in the same aggrieved language of victimization, and although they face the same array of economic forces as their hard-bitten ancestors, today's rebels make demands that are precisely the opposite. Tear down the federal farm programs, they cry. Privatize the utilities. Repeal the progressive taxes. All that Kansas asks today is a little help nailing itself to their cross of gold. ■

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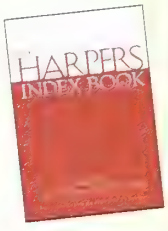



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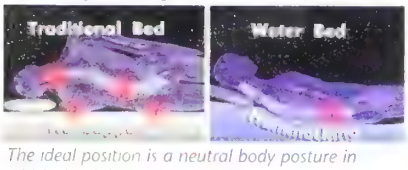
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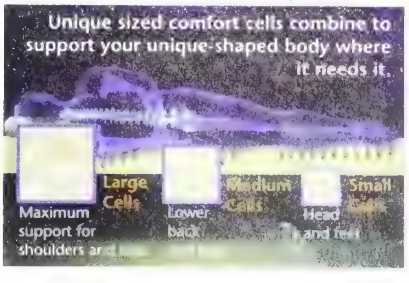
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# ASLAN RESURRECTED

## Searching for wild panthers in a domesticated world

*By Jay Kirk*

*e Being that we are asking about is almost like thing.*

—Heidegger

t was only my third day in Ulysses, Pennsylnia, when the one-armed panther hunter and tepped in out of the abyss to play a game of pool. e'd been searching the hills that morning, like e morning before, for an animal at I had been told all my life did ot exist, but then, just before on, we'd come across a set of tracks in the snow. At first, anding outside his truck, squintg at the large, long-gaited pugarks, holding himself with his ie arm for warmth, my elderly mpanion had seemed uncertain. ut now, as Roger Cowburn aned his cue, he was more than rtain, almost evangelical, actig as if the beating he was going dole out to me was due punishent for my lack of faith.



The game room in the back of is house was forsaken and stale-smelling like an fter-hours club for veterans. The bottles behind ie built-in bar looked as musty as the skins and eads and other useless parts of slain animals decrating the walls. Staring at me down the cue ick with a triumphal glow in his keen hunter's yes, he said that nothing makes his heart gladder han a nonbeliever, like myself, turned believer. Ie tapped the corner pocket. It's like this one poor man who called him one day out of breath, a guy who confessed that he'd been ridiculing Roger behind his back for years, that he'd never believed, but now he'd seen the truth and, he said, *you can tell me they're pink from now on and I'll believe ya.* Converts always make his day. "How many people like to admit they're wrong?" he asked me. "Darn few." He studied the seven ball sternly and then sank it gently. "You're darn right."

In the months since I began looking for the supposedly extinct eastern panther (a.k.a. mountain lion, puma, cougar, ghost cat of America), coming to the conclusion that it is quite possibly the most metaphysical mystery in American natural history, I have flown in gut-wrenching pirouettes fifty feet over the Everglades in a falling-apart Cessna piloted by a hungover Frenchman; I have insulted chaplain-faced biologists with badly timed questions about feline electroejaculation; I have been given a deep-tissue massage by an employee of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources—a balding, dentally compromised guy with flaming skulls tattooed on his forearms; I have ducked lightning while tiptoeing through a bear sanctuary; and I have listened to exasperated apparatchiks of the wildlife agencies, who are, frankly, "sick of this crap" about the mythical panthers. I have dwelt in the penetralia of

*Jay Kirk's last article for* Harper's Magazine, *"Watching the Detectives," appeared in the August 2003 issue.*



tainmen. I have visited sordid animal sanctuaries where mountain lions are caged in cement cells [illegible] lawyers; I've gazed upon the entrails of dead animals; and I've studiously attempted to learn how to [illegible]

## THE TONE OF THE MEETING IS FURTIVE, AS IF THE CELL HAD EVIDENCE OF A PLOT FOR WORLD DOMINION

blunter robustos left by what I have begun to think of as my bête noire. But my pursuit began at a meeting last year, around Roger's kitchen table, with several core members of a group of self-proclaimed "true believers" called the Eastern Puma Research Network (EPRN).

The house is freezing cold. Shivering under three layers, I am seated across the kitchen table from a man named Norman Davis, in a big black Russian shapka, and Roger, who holds court from the end. Stitched to the good sleeve of Roger's bulky parka is the official Eastern Puma Field Research patch, an encircled snarling cat's head bearing closer resemblance, on first glance, to a saber-toothed tiger than to a mountain lion. The furtive tone of the meeting, as if the cell has in its possession evidence of a plot for world dominion rather than clues to a natural mystery, is made only slightly more tense by the presence of its third member, a mute in tall rubber boots standing just behind me, his thuggish presence unsoftened by a faded sweatshirt blazoned with a sad, green-irised puma under his camouflage jacket.

Scattered before me are the morguish photos of slain woodland creatures and half a dozen pawprint plaster casts. On the table is a can of Zippo lighter fluid, a sputtering police scanner, and a small-caliber pistol half-concealed in a sock. A box of shotgun shells sits on top of the microwave. And looking down on us, caught in a ray of late-afternoon sun, hung above the kitchen table, is a beatific portrait of a panther, framed by heavenly blue, like Jesus Himself.

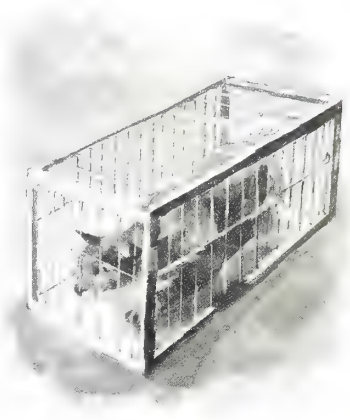
Roger holds up one of the casts—which resembles, in heft and texture, a large fossilized clam—and traces its lobed heel pad while comparing it with a heavier bear track. This particular cast was made [illegible] and near the body of a fawn that Roger's cousin discovered while plowing a late March snowfall. Roger and his research deputy, Olson, the guy standing over me, had gone to the scene [illegible] the rabbit-faced fawn in the ditch, its abdomen sliced open and its guts strewn on the half-frozen ground. A long bloody trail led from the woods where th[e] [illegible] had been killed and then dragged to th[e] side of the road. A cursory postmortem revealed [illegible] that the heart, liver, and lungs of the deer ha[d] been eaten—or were, at any rate, missing. It w[as] this unique way in which the prey's viscera ha[d] been dispatched, and the way the remains were then halfheartedly covered with loose dirt, leaves and debris, that convinced Roger the culprit w[as] in fact *Puma concolor couguar*. "First they pu[ll] out the intestines." Roger pronounces the last syllable so that I can't help but imagine ropy [in]ards coiled around the tines of a fork. "Now, a bear will just rip one all to pieces. A coyote wi[ll] hamstring it. But a cat, they'll break its neck, g[o] for the throat, bleed it out."

They searched the area and took photograph[s]. While Olson scoured the ground looking fo[r] more evidence—he has a talent for nosing ou[t] scat—Roger got his detective kit from the truc[k] and set about mixing a batch of plaster. They re[-] turned to the site every day, but the carcass re[-] mained undisturbed. Perhaps the cat, put off b[y] the human stink of forensic molestation, ha[d] abandoned its quarry. By the fourth day sti[ll] nothing had fed on it, so they conducted a fiel[d] autopsy by skinning out the carcass and count[-] ing the wounds. In the black-bound photo albu[m] tediously documenting each bloody step of the[ir] inquest, there is a close-up of a latex-glove[d] hand tugging back the hide of the fawn with [a] hand-drawn arrow pointing to a puncture in th[e] exposed crimson under the caption "tooth mark." When they came back on the tenth day, the[y] found fresh tracks in the mud, and the deer wa[s] not where they'd left it. They searched up an[d] down the road until they found it again, dragge[d] out into a field and almost completely devoure[d]—nothing left but ribs and hoof. Everything abou[t] the predation showed signs of a mountain lion, Roger said, right down to the way its spinal cor[d] was severed. Roger knows the behavior of the ca[t] intimately. He has seen kills like this himsel[f] several times. And yet the animal he's talkin[g] about has been thought extinct nov[-] for over a hundred years.

The fate of the eastern panther was sealed b[y] the arrival of European settlers. When the super[-] stitious pilgrims first encountered the primordia[l] bestiary of the New World—wolves, bears, an[d] prehistoric serpents among the mangroves—i[t] was the panther that preyed on their worst fears. It was a monster with a "Tail like a Lyon, it Leggs like a Bear's . . . its Claws like an Eagle, it eyes like a Tyger, its countenance . . . a mixture o[f] every Thing that is Fierce and Savage." Powerfu[l] enough to pull down a horse, to leap twenty fee[t] into the branches of a tree with a dog clamped i[n] its jaws, the cat, when hungry enough, coul[d]

ghter a flock of sheep in a single night. Its unhly scream sounded like a woman being murd; its hide glowed like "fox-fire at night and n lights burned from the eyes"; it stalked dren; it was rumored to have a taste for pregt wives.

With the Inquisition, during which cats were ociated with witchcraft, fresh in the pilgrims' ds, the panther was an intolerable demon, a ad symbol of the darkderness they had come to e with the benevolent light Christianity. So then, after of the deer and the rabbits l the grouse and the turkeys l the elk had been wiped by over-hunting and by ting down the forests to let all that celestial light, thus cing the panther to eat the lers' livestock, it was easy to n it into a scapegoat. "It is w only," Henry W. Shoeker lamented in his 1917 atise *Extinct Pennsylvania imals*, "that people are beming to wake up to the fact at the panthers were the victims of a cowardly ot to avert the white hunters' culpability."



Bounties were set, and out of the forests rumd wagons piled high with slain lions, heaped like rsian rugs. The cats were burned and their heads re stacked in the village square like bewitched, tlawed gourds. A trapper could fetch twenty llars for a scalp, but the animal was so reviled at its pelt was hardly worth nailing to the side a drafty shithouse. Even some Native Americans loathed the panther, since it was associated th Machtando, the Evil One, and because they lieved that the souls of unfaithful wives were rern as cougars. The wolf was a terrifying fairy tale, t the panther was an inconceivable monster, the ost vilified and feared of predators.

Once the species was dominant over a range eater than any predator in the New World, om northern Alberta to the tip of Patagonia*; y 1890 the eastern subspecies had evaporated. was considered officially extinct in New Jersey nd Massachusetts by 1800, with the last straglers killed in 1830 and 1858, respectively. The ast slain in Illinois was in 1818. Audubon, who had shot a panther or two himself, declared the animal close to extinction in the eastern states by 1851. The last bounty paid in Pennsylvania was in 1868, and the last confirmed eastern panther killed in the United States was shot in Barnard, Vermont, on Thanksgiving Day, 1881. Its stuffed corpse was then mounted and paraded from town to town under the billing: "Monster Panther—Don't Fail to See Him—An Object Lesson in Natural History." Thus was the panther banished from the wilderness.

The larger species, *Puma concolor*—a genus of its own—is now officially confined to a few patches of South America, Texas, and fringes of the western United States and Canada; the only known remnant in the East is a genetically compromised population of fifty or so cats mucking out an existence in the swamps of southern Florida. It's hard to believe it survived at all, considering the universal vilification. To the famous panther slayer Ben Lilly, "all panthers were dragons." Cougars are still treated as varmint in Texas. Even one early curator at the American Museum of Natural History referred to the panther as that "most insidious and deadly foe of human kind." Thoreau, a lone voice, wrote in his journal, in 1856, that since the panther had been exterminated he felt that he lived in a "tamed and . . . emasculated country."

One surprising reason hunters detested the animal was for its alleged cowardice. Popular hunting lore had it that you could sneak up on the cat and pull its tail. "When about to be knifed or shot, these animals are known to have looked the hunters in the eyes and shed real tears," Shoemaker wrote. Legendary outdoorsmen like James Capen "Grizzly" Adams had only contempt for the cougar. Teddy Roosevelt, that great preserver of land, also believed the cougar to be a coward, referred to it as a "noxious species," and favored killing it off entirely. And so it went that the policy of zero tolerance continued into the twentieth century, with federal exterminators chasing down the fugitives out West with strychnine-laced horsemeat and catnip-scented traps. These noble killers, early game wardens, employees of the Predator and Rodent Control division of the old U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey—the former name of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the same agency now responsible for protecting the wildlife it once so enthusiastically ushered into obsolescence—



*Its omnipresent range not only attests to the cat's abilito adapt to any climate—even, it appears, to the climate of nonexistence—but also suggests how the animal acquired such an absurd catalogue of names: puma, mountain lion, panther, cougar, catamount, painter, purple panther, Ozark howler, red tiger, deer tiger, brown on, Mexican lion, American lion, mountain screamer, at-of-the-mountains, Indian devil, etc. No other creature, save perhaps God, has as many names.*

Illustrations by Stan Fellows. Page borders are details from *Gwayakoshkaa, Namdawendaawe!* and *Nimmkawa*, by Tom Uttech. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York City.



continued [illegible] until the fifties, when people like Roger Cowburn began to see apparitions of the cat everywhere, like ghosts come back to haunt soldiers.

In the last decade, the number of sightings has increased so much that you might begin to believe the cats are everywhere. They are spotted in the suburbs of Baltimore, in the ghettos of Philadelphia, prowling the woods of Appalachia, and haunting the grounds of nuclear reactors in the South. Lured into cars at rest areas by ham-and-cheese sandwiches, they are seen absconding with dogs in their jaws. They are seen climbing telephone poles. Loping across bike paths. In cemeteries. Napping on church lawns. Chasing dogs in Mississippi. Trapped on the median strip of I-91 outside Boston. A woman in Binghamton, New York, said that a mountain lion showed up in her driveway and stared down her cat for twenty full minutes. Five teachers and sixty children at an elementary school in Pennsylvania saw a black panther, a mass hallucination that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources informed them was not a puma but merely "a black collie with mange."* In Oneida, New York, the birds have stopped chirping and there has been an "eerie silence" since its citizens first saw a large female cougar on the prowl. They devour house pets and confound drunks. They give horses heart attacks. They show up in Arkansas on the hoods of cars, on tennis courts. One panther visited an old lady who put supper out on the porch for it every night in winter. When it cut its feet on the ice, she said, the great cat lay still so she could stitch its bleeding paws. In Ohio a mountain lion attacked a man and his dog riding peaceably on their ATV. When the same man shot it, a day later, its "claws were six inches from my barrel." A dairy farmer in Orwell, Vermont, found fifteen of his cattle sliced to ribbons.



They are everywhere. And lest you think these are merely the Appalachian phantasmagoria of individuals "eating too many squirrel brains and drinking muscadine wine" (as one endangered-species expert put it), know that there is no shortage of credible witnesses. Game wardens in the Smoky Mountain National Park watched a panther for several hours through a telescope. The police are still searching for a pair in Delaware. Animal-control officers, U.S. representatives, and even one former director of the Fish and Wildlife Service have claimed to have seen them. Dav Mamet saw one in Vermont. Sightings come from every direction. The believers think th are coming in by train tracks, coming down fro Canada, down off the high abandoned loggi roads, traveling along the craggy mountain ridge The cats are coming in through tributaries fro the West, migrating from the North, trickling through the Appalachians, from Florida, fro Texas, following their instincts, their intern compasses, coming in the dark, in the fog of mor ing, so that one begins to imagine that they are co vening, a coven of cats, and that they will kee coming until they have flooded the East, that w won't see them until it's too lat until there's no place left to hide.

"The Game Commission categorically denie they exist," says the man in the shapka. In th next room, the videotape of a tawny nebulou spot that appears to be licking itself in a squar of sun-dappled grass, narrated by an astonishe hunter and his family, plays over and over. Be side the mustard-upholstered couch is a sma table with a deer-leg lamp. On the wall is th mounted head of a cat, its broad paws turned u like coat hooks, with the head dead center, form ing a grisly quincunx. The head is so deforme by a bad taxidermy job that it's hard to tell if it' really the beast in question.

"They won't acknowledge nothin'," Roger says

"There's a big cover-up."

"A helluva cover-up."

Just yesterday Roger got a re port about game commissioner showing up at a farmer's out of the blue two days after he'd shot a cougar and deep-sixed it in his back yard; the wardens knew he had it because it'd been implant ed with a tracking device and they told him if he didn't hand it over he'd be arrested.

"But yet the biologists say they don't exist?"

"Baloney, that's all."

"Their big song and dance is that any mountain lion that you do possibly see, if it isn't mistaken identity, 'cause usually they'll tell you you saw a fish or you saw a coyote—but if you press it too much, if you describe the animal too closely, they say, well yeah, you probably did see one, but it had to be an escaped pet."

Most people who believe in the eastern cougar think that it somehow, against the odds, managed to evade extinction by holding onto the craggy remote parts of Appalachia and that the wildlife agencies deny its existence only out of ignorance. But to Roger and the other members of the EPRN,

*"A local vet said that was ridiculous," says Norman Davis. "that there are no such things as black collies. Which is not to say that there are no such things as black panthers either. If by panther you mean a mountain lion. Puma concolor . . . and not a leopard.*

campaign of denial is due to the fact that, te simply, the government secretly reintro- ced the lions.

t began in the early 1950s, around the same ie that people out West began seeing UFOs. e government brought them in on boxcars m Texas, put them into large cages on the cks of trucks, and then let them out in the ods. Roger says he knows of a district game pro- tor who set loose six cats into the Pennsylva- a Grand Canyon, a dark stretch of forested rge in the superior vena cava of the Alleghe- es. The man is now deceased, but his son, who nt along as a ten-year-old and helped his father ease the cats, told Roger that his father had vorn him to secrecy."

"I'll tell you what I think the cover-up is about." orman taps the table like a nervous stenogra- er. "The minute they admitted they was here, u know what would happen? The antis would p in just like the people did in California," he ys, referring to the ban on hunting mountain ons that conservation and animal-rights groups ccessfully lobbied for and put into law in 1990. s a result, he says, people are now getting mauled ile walking the dog. Two women have been lled jogging. A bird-watcher was eaten alive. They got an explosion of mountain lions out ere right now."

It's true that as humans sprawl farther into ougar territory in the West, attacks are on the se. Nearly half the attacks on humans in the last undred years have occurred over the past decade; vo recent attacks on children resulted in a 50 million suit brought by the parents against the ate of California for mismanagement of the on. Just three years ago a man was mauled in a uburb of Denver: with blood trickling down his ice, he saw a vision of Christ that would have ade St. Ignatius jealous—St. Ignatius, who ea- erly cried out from the Colosseum as the lions pproached: "I am the wheat of God. I must be round by the teeth of the lions into flour!"

If people knew, there'd be a panic, Norman ays. That's why the government doesn't want to get out. To counter this information black- ut, the EPRN does its best to educate the pub- ic so that people will take the imminent threat f this predator seriously. When you write to he EPRN for information, they send a "fact heet" crammed with survival tips. Do not turn our back to the cat. Stay calm. Do not try to un. Never scream. Maintain eye contact. Nev- r mind that the last known attack in the east- rn United States was in 1844, when a doctor was killed by a panther as he made his way through one of the winter mountain passes in this very county.

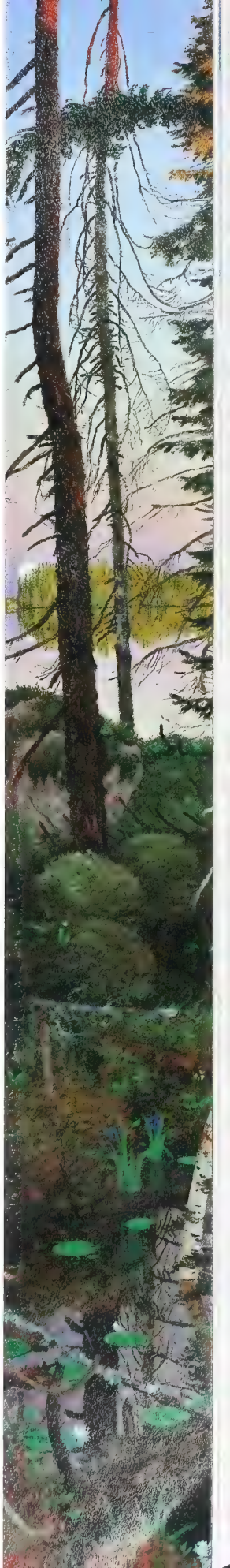
Roger is packing a .357 the morning he takes me up to see where his cousin found the massacred fawn. It is so cold that he still has blue flecks of shampoo in his hair from when the pipes froze on him mid-shower. If you were a secret government agent tracking cougars via satellite, looking down on Roger and me listening to Tony Bennett, and you waited until night, which would only make sense (cougars are nocturnal), you would see that where we are, in Potter County, falls within one of the darkest spots in the eastern United States. But in freezing day-

## DO NOT TURN YOUR BACK ON THE CAT. STAY CALM. DO NOT TRY TO RUN. MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT. NEVER SCREAM

light, on this narrow glaring road, where the snow is plowed into fjords taller than the roof of our Blazer, the intensity of the cold and the brightness of the snow turn everything ultra vivid: a pink house with a battered Santa Claus waving from the roof; a crowd of cows standing around a steaming water trough, hock deep in shit-stained snow; the Second Amendment Task Force Charter Founder pin glinting in Roger's NRA cap.

In these few hundred square miles there are more sightings than anywhere else in the eastern United States, even more than are reported in southern Florida, where the animal still officially exists. (Although the Florida panther population dwindles at 60 to 80 individuals, according to EPRN figures there is a thriving population of at least 1,500 cats, alive and well, in the East overall.) As we skirt a steep hollow rimmed with trees the color of frozen mud, an icy stream moving sluggishly below, Roger points out where he found his last set of tracks, a few weeks ago. The cat had come to the edge of the woods and then jumped—thirty feet—to the embankment on the other side, thirty feet of air from a stationary position being nothing for a cougar. Roger followed the tracks all the way down into the ravine and then back up into the pines on the other side. No one saw the cat, but from the lengthy stride he could tell it was damn big.

Roger was bear hunting with some buddies in Canada the first time he saw a panther. That was thirty-two years ago, in 1972, the year before Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act into law. It was gigantic and dappled by the early morning sunlight. Chocolate brown, sleek and brawny, the muscles of the fabled beast literally *rippled*. It was the most beautiful thing Roger had ever seen in his life. The cat was crouched in the middle of the road, staring down the car. He whispered to





the friend sitting beside him in the front seat, *Boy, that sure [illegible] to kill it.* But he also thought how impressive it would look mounted and mounted on his game room, maybe propped up on the hearth overlooking the pool table, but by the time his finger had found the

## THE MAN IN THE ORANGE CAP LOOKED INTO THE CAMERA AND SAID THAT HE'D PERSONALLY SHOT THE CAT

will to pull the trigger the decision to feel bad about something for the rest of his life was taken away from him. The cat was gone.

Still, he would not fully accept his true calling until one day fourteen years ago, when he went into the trading post for the paper and saw one of the photocopied wanted posters on the tackboard beside the ads for firewood, chain-saw repair, and lost dogs. It was a picture of a cougar with a phone number to report sightings. He called the number when he got home and spoke to a man, a guy in Baltimore, it turned out, who spoke with the crinkly tenor of a buckshot beer can. His name was John Lutz. Lutz was a city guy, a cryptozoologist who, after seeing a black panther himself, had given up UFOs, spontaneous human combustion, and even Bigfoot to form the Eastern Puma Research Network.

Roger was happy to tell this guy Lutz about the sighting he had, some twenty years earlier, but Lutz said it would be better for them to speak in person. Roger was surprised when the guy actually showed up at his door a couple of days later with his wife. They had driven all the way from Baltimore, through a snowstorm. They sat at Roger's kitchen table, and Lutz showed him diagrams that looked like star maps of where cougars had appeared in the East, constellations of hundreds, thousands, of visions, the same impossible vision Roger himself had experienced. For hours Lutz filled him in about how the cougar was really here, despite official denials, and how the "presumed extinct" status was a cover-up for a more nefarious and massive government conspiracy to secretly reintroduce the predator to control the deer. There was pressure from the timber industry, on account of the legions of bark-hungry ungulates killing the trees, but also partly, maybe, as a concession to the auto insurance lobby, since deer were costing so much on the roads. He told Roger that they had received reports of cats being dropped by parachutes into forests from government helicopters in the dead of night. He warned him that being a field agent for the EPRN could be dangerous work. Some

in the organization packed heat. One investig
tor had even vanished into thin air while loc
ing into a spate of sightings in West Virgin
where they believed the Navy had planted se
eral cats, fitted with radio collars, in order
monitor them via satellite. Shortly after the
man—a naval intelligence officer, as it happene
or, at any rate, a guy who worked at the Naval R
search Laboratory—had gone in to check it ou
several black helicopters were seen circling th
property, and then they never saw him again.
was possible, even likely, Lutz thought, that th
Navy had used them in this particular case.
regime of ridicule kept people from openly tal
ing. Well, yeah, Roger said, sure, he'd pretty muc
figured that out already on his own, or somethi
like it. He knew the Game Commission was t
more trustworthy than the KGB. But the tru
was, he hadn't put all the pieces together, and th
guy Lutz had really opened his eyes.*

It was shortly after Roger was appointed chi
EPRN researcher for Pennsylvania that he foun
a black box on his front steps. It was a plai
unmarked videotape with a yellow Post-it no
that said, simply, "Killed in Milport, PA." Whe
he took the tape inside and put it in his VCR, h
found himself looking at footage of a guy in a dir
orange hunting cap standing over a dead mou
tain lion. The man in the orange cap looke
straight into the camera and said that he'd pe
sonally shot the cat and that if he saw any mo
he was going to shoot them too because the
were killing deer in his favorite hunting spo
Royally creeped out, Roger got a magnifyi
glass and, with the tape on pause, examined th
swollen pixels until he could make out a sign
the background that said Big Five camp. H
talked to Lutz, and although they were worrie
about being set up by the feds, Roger drove
over to Milport to take a look-see himself. H
found the camp, with the help of a couple h
found stuck in a mudhole, sitting in a gray Buic

*It's funny the way memes travel over history. Lutz, a tr
believer, did not know it but the organization he was form
ing was in the tradition of a group formed in the 1930s b
a Congregationalist preacher from Chester, Vermont, calle
the Irrepressible and Uncompromising Order of Pantherite
The creed of this quasi-cult, over which the reverend w
elected president, or Grand Puma, and which included a tre
surer, or Grand Catamount Keeper of the Catnip, was
likewise prove the existence of the eastern panther. To must
their zeal for the incorporeal beasts, they sang hymns com
posed specially about* Puma concolor, *under the directio
of an officer known as the Grand Caterwauler. There
also a good chance, however, that the holy relic of the
faith, a track of the sacred animal discovered by the good re
erend on a hike, not unlike Joseph Smith stumbling over th
golden tablets, was fraudulent. Still, at least a hundred pe
ple of "similar conviction" came to the reverend's meetin
in 1934 to be ordained into the fold as "pantherites," whe
they gazed on the holy relic and listened wistfully to test
monials from those who had beheld the panther itself.*

ening to the radio, all four wheels stuck up to wells. Roger searched the grounds until he able to determine exactly where the video l been filmed. Roger conferred with a friend the Game Commission, who wanted noth- to do with it but suggested that Roger con- t Fish and Wildlife special investigator Kelvin ith. The investigator was eager to see the e and wanted Roger to send it right away. He d him not to spare a moment. The sooner y could prosecute the poachers, the better. So ger immediately put the tape in the mail, hout making a copy for himself. He regrets it this day.

If he had been more familiar with the mys- y, he would have known that evidence van- ed. Specimens vaporized from DNA labs. ings were lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. Car- ses were whisked away in the middle of the ght. Paperwork was destroyed. Photographs und up missing. Road kills disappeared, wit- sses were harassed, cameras were confiscated. ter several months without hearing back, he s about to go get the tape back himself when saw on the news that this same agent Smith d been arrested. The FBI had raided his sheep m in Perry County and dragged his pond for sault rifles and explosives, and then Smith— s real name was Abdul uhaimin—was arraigned r training terrorists linked the 1993 World Trade enter bombing. Muhaimin d apparently purchased as- ult rifles and other equip- ent using his federal ildlife officer discount.

"Damn federal wildlife ent was a terrorist! What you make of that?"

Like so much other evi- ence, the tape was never en again. Terrorism not- ithstanding, this uncanny usiveness of evidence—the troubling tendency f hair, blood, and scat to vanish when handed ver for official scrutiny—only reaffirms Roger's onviction that the panther is at the center of huge and ominous conspiracy, as if the wilderness itself were under the control of some malign and experimental force.



As we crest onto a highland meadow, Roger lows to point off into the woods where his cousin ound the mutilated fawn. He creeps along, his ose pressed to the window, fogging the glass, and e calls what he sees with the bored recitation of n eye exam. "Deer tracks, deer tracks, deer tracks, leer tracks. More deer tracks. Squirrel tracks. Turkey tracks. Deer tracks. Jeepers!" He brakes and then underhands the truck into reverse, hits the gas, and steers us backward.

He idles, staring at the snowbank, until the smell of exhaust seeps into the cab. The Tony Bennett tape flips. I hear a dog barking in the cold. Finally, he mumbles, "H'mm, h'mm, h'mm."

I ask what he sees.

"H'mmm."

What is that? I ask.

"There's a possibility that might be a cat track right there. I can't tell for sure."

He drives forward another inch, squinting at the blinding snow. His head bobs back. "Ho ho ho ho, ho ho ho ho."

"Get out of here," I say.

"I think it is, I think it is." He reaches through the wheel and yanks the truck into park and then wrestles a glove on with his teeth. Outside, the air is so frigid it feels as if my nose is being pried off my face. We stand over the curious tracks in a nimbus of chugging gray exhaust.

"Well, you know it's not a bear track, because a bear doesn't walk like that. There's only one animal that runs like that."

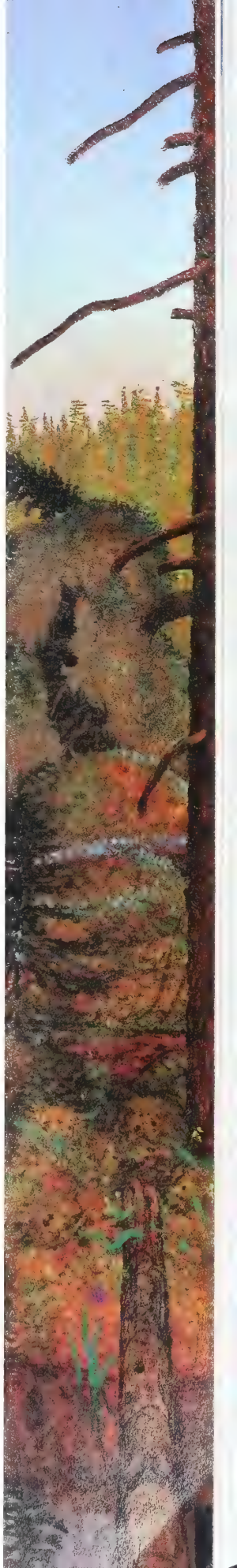
I say I don't know that.

He sternly cuts me off: "It's a cat track!"

I ask him what else it could be.

"Nothin'," he says. He hugs himself and wobbles his knees. His ears are crimson. "It *can't* be a bear. The bear's in hibernation. You see the distance between the tracks? Where he was lopin'?" Roger bends over and sketches four circles beside the mysterious holes with his thumb, a quick diagram of how the cat's foot falls, forepaw to hind paw, pattern close together. There's a yard of untrod snow between each impression. "When a cat's lopin', you'll see a track here, and right in front of it you'll see another track. You can always tell. See how big those tracks are? There's only one animal that makes tracks like that."

We are still in the valley of Roger's ancestors. Arctic fields drift by lopsided and shimmering blue-pink in the early setting sun. Roger says he just can't believe how political the whole panther thing can get. They have to be paranoid enough about stings and conspiracies and covert reintroductions, but, believe it or not, there are divisions within their own ranks. Saboteurs. He is speaking of the most prominent name in the whole quixotic world of the eastern panther puzzle, a coal miner in West Virginia named Todd Lester. Todd Lester, once one of them, is now the victim of a





him everything he knows. But then, disillusioned, misguided, the young coal miner broke off to start his own satanic organization to scratch for the eastern panther. And so in this he had a band of fanatics with several white-

tists who've infiltrated his group, and Roger fears they will quash the faith of the true believers.

He tells me this as we idle at the bottom of a hill by a pile of bleached boards poking through the snow. A trickle of bone-white snow whistles silently off a dune-shaped drift. The scrap pile is the remains of his family's farm, land now subdivided and sold off. It makes Roger sad to think how this place that he had so many fond childhood memories of, like knocking potato beetles into a pan of kerosene with a stick, has changed. The same place where he stayed up late listening to his great-grandmother's stories about the panthers—it's hard to believe—now belongs to August Kreis, the minister of information and propaganda for Aryan Nations. When they sold, nobody imagined that the neo-Nazi party, forced into bankruptcy and chased out of their former home in Idaho, would designate Potter County as a potential new headquarters. By way of announcing themselves to the neighborhood, Kreis invited over five hundred skinheads to his land for a white-supremacist music fest featuring Brutal Attack. Police helicopters filled the sky. The cattle were restless for days.

Roger has a weary look that seems to say, well, if you can believe something like this can happen—Nazis occupying the hill you and your brother used to sled as children, the local game warden training Islamist terrorists—the idea that the government might be releasing lethal predators into the woods doesn't seem so farfetched, does it now?

Listening to this tale, I feel the familiar sense of gradual catastrophe that always comes over me at dusk, more so now with the flurrying dark ticking silently against the reflection of my face, and I wonder, Why is it so easy for me, a grown man, to still believe in monsters? Why so much instinctual fear? Are these visions of panthers only collective hallucinations? Did we kill off all of our predators just as we killed off our own instincts in order to become what we are today: bland, over-affluent prey?

In the pine needles at Todd Lester's feet is a handheld GPS device. While we wait for it to plot our location in the universe (atop a moun-



West Virginia, in early May), Todd stan
half sleeping, leaning against a tree, gazing
into the woods. He is normally asleep at th
time, with the shades pulled. He has to tak
melatonin to straighten out his head. "If a coug
wanted to jump me now I don't expect I cou
put up much of a fight." He wears a camouflag
jacket and a thin, trim mu
tache that accentuates th
boyishness a life of coal mi
ing on the graveyard sh
has yet to rob from his fac
A hat pushed back on h
head says EASTERN COUG
in fat, flamy letters.

We are tying infrared ca
eras to trees, the same ty
used by voyeuristic hunters to spy on unsuspec
ing prey. Each camera is chained and doubl
padlocked, because bears will tear them apa
When the thunderclouds that have been gathe
ing all morning rumble overhead, there's the su
den smell of ozone and raw earth. Coming t
Todd snatches up the GPS, and as I quickly kne
in front of the camera to display the whiteboa
scrawled with our coordinates, I'm momentari
blinded by the flash. As I hurriedly follow after m
camouflage-clad guide, a ghost impression of woo
swarming on my retinas, he flits in and out
view, half visible in the eye-tricking forest. Befo
we get back to the truck, it is pouring rain.

While we sit out the downpour, Todd record
the GPS coordinates in his damp little noteboo
Each is five square miles; with eighteen camer
per grid, he has only 80,000 or so acres to g
Then he pops a Mountain Dew and, clutching
loosely on his knee, nods off for a spell. Tod
worked a full shift in the coal mine two nights ag
before driving here yesterday morning so that w
could break down the first grid of cameras, set u
a month earlier when the snow was still "ax
high to a Ferris wheel," as he says, and then, a
ter ten hours running around the woods, he w
up past midnight in his motel room, tinkerin
with each camera, changing batteries, rewindin
film, setting timers, eating cold pizza, and clean
ing mud off the wires until all eighteen were la
out on the floor around his bed like readied bomb
Then, lying in the dark, he worried the way he wi
when he's five miles underground, obsessing abou
his next cougar expedition, trying to plan for wha
might go wrong, praying that enough things th
could go wrong will go right just long enough t
give him the chance to prove what he knows
real. I myself, as usual, dreamed about bears.

Because I have this recurring dream in whic
I'm running away from a bear, in a similar settin
to the bear sanctuary where Todd and I are no
tramping, it's hard for me not to feel paranoid an
fateful, like the character in one of thos

ic-realist stories who suddenly turns the page nd himself reading a description of the very n in which he sits, in the very same chair, his r lightly underscoring the sentence that will al to him the plot turn in which his conusness and eternity intersect. In fact, I found elf with that very book in my lap one day tly before coming here. A cheap, yellowed y of C. G. Jung's *Man and His Symbols*, opened ndom to discover everything that was wrong n me:

> he familiar dream in which the dreamer is pursued y an animal nearly always indicates that an ininct has been split off from the consciousness and ught to be (or is trying to be) readmitted and reingrated into life. The more dangerous the behavor of the animal in the dream, the more unconscious the primitive and instinctual soul of the dreamr, and the more imperative is its integration into his fe if some irreparable evil is to be forestalled.

A friend of mine who's familiar enough with my dency toward cosmic paranoia was sadistic ugh to call me the night before I drove down West Virginia to read something he'd found in ook called *Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome*, out how bears faced by Christian martyrs in Colosseum were the most ruthless of all the *tia*, since, unlike the lion, which slew its vics with one swift merciful bite, the bear inted the slowest and most terrifying death, hamnging and then eating its prey alive, indifferent the wails of mortal pain that must have so titted the Roman bystanders, etc. What my friend esn't know is that in a demented way, part of me ds the idea of being ushered out of this world a wild animal strangely appealing. To have one's worst fear finally realized: it must be a great relief.

When it starts misting, Todd puts the truck drive, and we begin scouting for locations. The st spots to plant a camera, the best places to cape a glimpse of the spectral cat, fall along the natal highways of the forest, the labyrinthine passeways cut through the wilderness by the untless foot falls of unseen animals. These insible trails emerge for his eyes effortlessly. The PS rattling on the dashboard tells us that we're 4,137 feet, high on an ancient overgrown logng road in an area simply called the Back Couny. In three hours we've set up only two cameras, it a half hour later he's yet to see a tree or trail iat offers any promise. At this rate I fear we'll be ere overnight. Finally he turns down a steep, escending skid road that hasn't been used in at ast a decade. We inch down through a jungle of ick ferns, juddering, as if being let down slowly a winch. I cannot help noticing that Todd's nuckles are white, when he says, as if to himself, "You'd be sittin' here till the Fourth of July and still see nobody if you broke down up here." The sound of evergreen saplings rasping against the undercarriage only partly camouflages the loud pops each time the tires go over a downed limb. The road finally gives out, repossessed by the forest. With no other choice but to search on foot, we gather the gear out of the back of the truck.

On the tailgate, where somebody else might have stuck a Jesus fish, is an anatomically correct paw print, the regal seal of the puma. We each take a camera, and with bungee cords around our necks and heavy chains looped through our belts, we wade downhill through the trees, clanging like ghosts or two escapees from a chain gang. Todd moves ahead swinging his camera like a camouflage lunchbox. When we turn a bend and I can no longer see the truck, we step off the road, down an embankment, into the perpetual dusk of the deep forest.

We come to a stream, and Todd hops across the slippery rocks, as agile as a cat himself. On the other side we scurry up a muddy hill studded with tiny purple flowers, grabbing roots, and down into a briar-tangled hollow, and then up again through a jungle of rhododendron. Out of breath, we stop to inspect a pile of scat, which he pokes with a stick, pointing out the embedded bits of mouse vertebrae.

"See how it's got them constrictions in it? Kind of weathered out?" He gives a defeated little nod. "Probably can't get no DNA out of it."

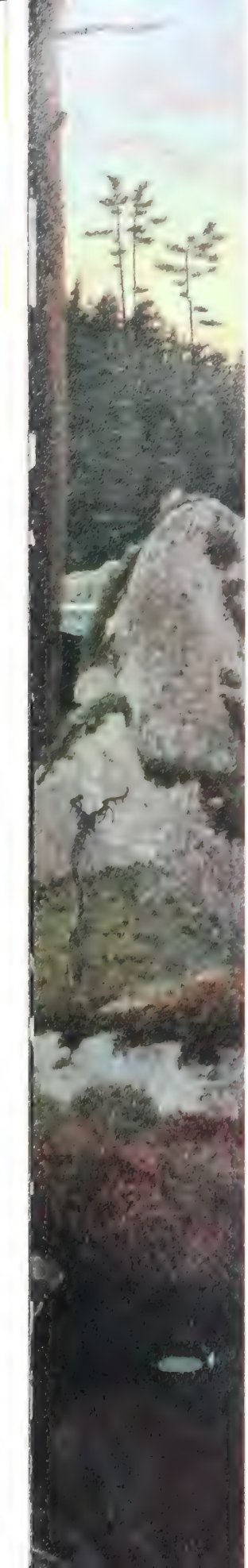
From there, we pick up a game trail, which we follow till it feeds into a photogenic hub of interconnected animal paths with good light. A

## WE INCH DOWN THROUGH A JUNGLE OF SLICK FERNS, JUDDERING, AS IF BEING LET SLOWLY DOWN ON A WINCH

thrush skirls glassily in the canopy overhead, its song everywhere and nowhere at once. Todd gives me his bowie knife to cut down half a dozen or so ill-placed saplings that, along with other brush and dead branches, he makes into a pile, which we drag into a barricade he hopes will funnel passing wildlife toward the eye of the camera. After he picks a tree with the best vantage and secures the camera with a bungee cord, he stacks a couple of flat rocks underneath.

"Afraid this one won't do too hot," he says, wedging a half-rotten stick near at hand behind the camera. This frustration perplexes me, not just because we've already traveled nearly an hour away from the truck but because we have passed what I would bet were at least a hundred





in flirting

-intelligentsia. First came

## If it were your soul that had fled to the mountains, you too would hunt after it like Ahab gone mad

ty years earlier, had shown that the eastern coy-

tracker. Then the jaguar expert. Then the ge-

biologist, David Maehr, the former head of the Florida Panther Project, under the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission, a man hailed for doing more to save the East's last known

man. Before he knew it, Todd had a board of di-

cess to the land.

ious regulating agencies whose blessing he needed to conduct his camera survey, but for some of Todd's scientific advisers, who all strongly believe that the

place without native predators like the wolf and the mountain lion, it may have more to do with laying the groundwork for reintroduction than with a genuine belief that Todd will find anything already living there.

Their first political action was a gambit on the radical notion that a real live mountain lion deserved as much protection as an extinct mountain lion. As it stands, out of an alleged thirty-two subspecies, only two subspecies—the inbred Florida panther and

granted protection in 1973 when the Endangered

caught moseying around the eastern woods, it

securing protection for any mountain lion in the

(migrant, circus fugitive, or whatever), would be to petition the Department of the Interior to

"Similarity of Appearances" clause, wh

granted, this petition would give the puma

versal protection across its genus. Once the

had the government's unconditional prote

it would have the chance to repopulate unl

dered, and measures for recovery could be

into place without undue violence.

Todd's petition was sen

Washington. Bruce Babbitt, secretary of the

nor's under Clinton, rejected it, saying that

government could not consider such a clause

till there was adequate proof of a breeding,

perpetuating non-ethereal population. And

Todd continues to look.

Once a camera #19 is chained and padlock

and the toggles and timers and whatnot are set

walks off into the woods until he's just out

sight. And then, looking pale and entranced,

comes back as a passably deranged sleepless a

mal, half-devoted impression of something

walks on all four limbs, stooped low, arms dangli

moving slowly back and forth across the came

purview like a burglar trying to foil a trip wire, w

a little nod each time the laser tags his arm

triggers a flash, until he's sure the camera

snare anything that enters its ambit.

It was not far from here, eighteen years a

that Todd had his own vision of the panther

was the one and only time the coal miner

laid eyes on the fabular beast. When he repo

ed it to the Department of Natural Resour

they treated him as if he'd spotted a UFO. Th

told him he'd probably seen a dog. But tha

the thing: He'd been *looking* for a dog. One of

redbone coonhounds had gone stray at dusk,

he had dog on his mind, was intently focused

dog, on the essence and expectation of dog,

here was something crouched before him w

kohl-traced eyes and a long willowy tail th

evoked nothing in the way of dog so much a

frequency completely and unequivocally

Then, with the cat, a part of what the coal m

er knew to be his soul broke off and vanished

it were your soul that had fled to the mountai

you too would spend every spare hour of your

hunting after it like Ahab gone mad. You wo

not want to hear that the animal has been extin

for a hundred years. And neither, probably, wo

you find much consolation in the notion th

*When he collects the pictures a month later, in addit*
*to several dozen pictures of me holding the rain-speck*
*the camera would set up today, will have harvested*
*deer, 11 black bears, 2 coyotes, 2 raccoons, 1 groun*
*1 black dog, and one unknown animal. A month a*
*that's very happy to still be on part of the camera's*
*make off with #14, never to be seen again. The only*
*of the culprit will be a out of focus close up of*
*head, eyes, and then, in the next frame, a dead m*
*view of sky, partly visible through an oculus in the tree*

ır "instinct's perception of itself," as Jung
ote, burrowed deep in the unconscious, may
ve emerged from its lightless den in the archetypal guise of a lion, all the more powerful for being *invisible*.

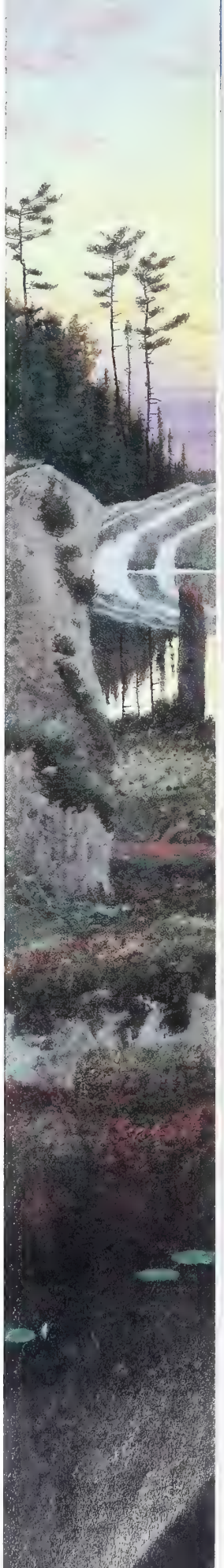
Although Todd doesn't believe in Lutz's
zy conspiracy theories anymore, he does be-
ve that you can't ignore the ample evidence
cover-ups. He is still perturbed by the mystery
what happened to a female cougar captured
authorities in nearby Pocahontas County in
76. It caused such a stir that a mob showed up
see the cat, with many in the crowd holler-
g for it be killed then and there. The towns-
ople were already riled because, only two days
fore, a farmer taken by surprise while tinker-
g on his truck—he'd looked up in time to see
e animal jump the fence with one of his lambs
its jaws—had shot a male lion, which was
pposedly an escaped pet. To complicate mat-
rs, the female turned out to be pregnant, which
t only bolstered suspicions that it was the
ate of the slain male but strongly suggested
e presence of a breeding population, which
eant the intervention of the Fish and Wildlife
rvice, the federal agency responsible for en-
cing the Endangered Species Act. Nobody
ew what to do with the cat. The West Virginia
vision of Natural Resources, which was hold-
g the animal, kept telling the feds to come
t "your" cat. The feds told the state to re-
lease it into the woods, but the state balked,
ying that it would only be
ot if it were set loose back
the vicinity. Finally they
cided to set the mountain
on loose in the "extremely
ild" Back Country of the
onongahela, which is
here Todd and I are now.
ut then, at the last minute,
Maurice Hornocker, a
nowned expert on moun-
in lions, stepped in and de-
rmined—reportedly over
ne telephone—that the cat
as tame and should not be
eleased, since tame mountain lions were "dan-
erous when turned loose in the wild because
ney home in on small children."

"That's where the letters end," Todd says, re-
rring to a batch he received through a FOIA re-
uest. We have stopped in the middle of a stream
ongested with bright green moss-covered boul-
ers to regard a waterfall. "The DNR said they de-
troyed all the paperwork." He does not take their
vord for it that the cat died in captivity. Nor
loes he rule out that it was a relict of the eastern
ubspecies. If tests on the male showed it was an escaped pet, how come they didn't keep the documentation? If the female cat died in captivity, he thinks, given the regulations of such animals, there should be, at the very least, a record of what happened to the kittens. What happened to the kittens? "I won't say cover-up, but it's shady. And the female, if they did turn her loose ..." He looks around, as if the offspring of such an animal could now be just out of sight, just off-camera, in the brush behind us.*



Meanwhile, as authorities in Pocahontas County fought over what to do with their cougar, down in North Carolina environmentalists were testing the boundaries of the newly minted Endangered Species Act. They were threatening to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with the U.S. Forest Service, unless they halted timber extraction in Nantahala National Forest on the grounds that numerous (though, naturally, unconfirmed) mountain lions had been reported. A brilliant ploy: if the habitat rights of the snail darter could quash a hundred-million-dollar dam, legal protection of the cougar—an umbrella species with a range of 150 square miles—could thwart mining, road construction, logging, and commercial development, plus protect the habitats of thousands of smaller species otherwise destined for the river of extinction. The lion, whether real or not, had become to many eyes the savior returned from the wilderness. Aslan resurrected.

"See this cliff?" Todd says, pointing directly over our heads. "This is a good place for a cougar to ambush something below." He sighs, disgusted with the poor choice of location for the next camera, as if there were not enough wilderness. Who knows which way the panther will travel? Who knows how poor the odds are that this tree—accessorized with a mechanical eye—will be the one out of ten billion? If he had his way he would go by instinct. He would set up cameras wherever it felt right instead of worrying about following the established grids and stuff like that put in place by the advisers. He tries not



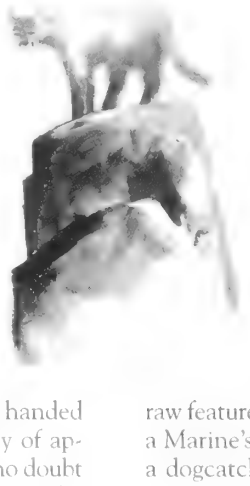
* *Adding to this mystery, the skull of the male was sent to the Fish and Wildlife Service laboratory at the National Museum of Natural History for final analysis. Yet, according to Alfred Gardner, curator of North American mammals at the National Museum, who was able to tell me from personal experience that cougar meat was "assuredly quite tasty," they were never able to ascertain the subspecies since the specimen in question had mysteriously vanished the very weekend it appeared at the lab.*



[illegible] months, or a year, he has still produced no evidence. But mainly, I suspect, he can't choose a location because in each choice, in each camera, in each dull snapshot of a deer or a fox, lies the potential for failure.

He already fears that he's lost the geneticist.

That will be disappointing, of course, not just because it means no longer having access to cheap DNA tests but also because it was such a coup to get Melanie Culver on their board of directors in the first place. Culver is the scientist who upset the applecart of taxonomy by declaring, after a four-year study of cougar DNA, that instead of the previously believed thirty-two distinct subspecies there were only six: five indigenous to South and Central America, and only one north of Nicaragua. Meaning, of course, then, that all pumas in North America—*Puma concolor hippolestes*, *P.c. oregonensis*, *P.c. browni*, *P.c. azteca*, *P.c. stanleyana*, *P.c. vancouverensis*, *P.c. californica*, *P.c. olympus*, etc., even the inbred, one-balled murmur-hearted *P.c. coryi* down in Florida—belong to a single subspecies. That they are, in fact, all the same animal. And if you want to look at it this way, you could say they are now *all* eastern panthers. If taxonomy is the science of what we name ourselves, then this would be the mountain lion's greatest identity crisis. But for the ECF it is the best news they've ever heard: political salvation in the slime of a petri dish. In effect, Culver's study has handed them the genetic version of a similarity of appearances clause, and, with time, it will no doubt significantly alter the legal future of cougars in the East. But until then, in woods blurred by verging nightfall, there will be men tying cameras to trees



Pennsylvania Wildlife Conservation Officer William Williams says lately there's been a lot of beaver problems. Bears are also a major pain in his neck. With the drought, there were no blueberries, the nut harvest was not so hot, so you had a lot of trash cans raided. A lot of nuisance calls. Just yesterday he had to respond to a call from a woman who'd been assaulted by a woodchuck. And then, this morning, with me tagging along, he went directly from burning a beaver trap out to some lake cabins where a [illegible] and black bear had been seen cavorting in somebody's hot tub. There, he checked the trap, set a few days earlier: a length of culvert with a trail of doughnuts leading up to the guillotine door. Wildlife, it seems, is a nuisance, but easy to fool. The next call brought us here, where, just in front of America [illegible] Post 452, with a giant white early-mod cruise missile parked on the front lawn, he snap on latex gloves to deal with the broken deer l ing on the shoulder. It is mysteriously unscathe except for one upturned ear, like a purse filled wit blood that flickers obscenely in the truck's flash ing yellow light. With a clang, Williams drops th deer rack, a mesh metal gurney hinged to th tem of his Dakota, and he drags the buck by on stiff leg, leaving a trail of gore, and heaves onto the platform, all without getting a spot o his creased khaki shirt.

Back in his truck, rolling down one of th finest paved roads in Sullivan County, Pennsy vania, he picks up where he left off. "There's a element out there who thinks there's a—I gue you would call it a conspiracy. That there's som sort of cover-up by the state wildlife agencies convince people there aren't mountain lions he when there are. It's totally wron There's nothing to hide. There r ally isn't." He says that if the Gam Commission had reintroduce mountain lions, they would n have done it covertly; they'd b patting themselves on the bac "We've introduced a number species back into the state: fishe the otter, bald eagle, osprey, per grine falcon—and, if you go bac to the turn of the century, the were practically no deer left in th state. They actually brought the in on boxcars from Michigan."

WCO Williams has somewh raw features, lashless eyes, and a head shaved li a Marine's. He is a law-enforcement officer, n a dogcatcher. "Game warden," he admonish me, is a term as dead as the notion that wildli that great welfare state, might get by on its ow without the protection of men with guns. Whic explains why his truck is crammed with firepo er. He's got a pistol strapped to his hip, a strapped overhead is a 12-gauge shotgun—weapon, he said, mostly for human contr poachers and perps like the hick assholes wh insist on bringing machine guns to deer cam Rattling in his coin nook are a handful of spa cartridges. The scope-mounted .22 on the ba seat is for "dispatching" animals. The other rif a tranquilizer gun, is for giving them bad drean

"We have over a million hunters in the woo every fall. No one's either accidentally or purpose shot one. A lot of highways through th state, and there hasn't been any roadkills mountain lions. Mountain lions have to somewhere. How about a skull? Certainly bon would be hard evidence. You know? They don hibernate, so how about a snowfall with a goo

of tracks? And I guess if you look at the der picture—and this isn't just Pennsyl-a—how about a population in Maine? or mont? Someplace. West Virginia? *Nowhere* he East. They don't float above the ground. y leave tracks. They have to die sometime. y have to have young. They're not Dracula, imagine they show up on film." He ticks off same exasperated litany of reasons that I e heard, with varying degrees of rancor, from ntless state wildlife agencies regarding the ern panther's great implausibility. "It's just true. We don't have a population of cougars. ey're not here. But if people want to believe hey're gonna believe it."

He makes a right onto an indistinguishable road—you wouldn't notice it unless you e looking—and we bump along through the ods until we come to a bosky clearing of nt ferns that feather past as high as the bot-n of our windows, filling the forest air with a ery, happy light. In my side mirror I can see buck's hooves, crossed like a ballerina's, ncing along.

"It just amazes me that people would dedicate ir lives to searching for something that esn't exist." He adjusts the rattling CB. eople get a thought in their mind that there's particular animal out there, and by God, in ir mind that's what they're looking at. I an, you talk to these Area 51 people—now n not comparing these people who think they v a mountain lion to them *exactly*, but I think aybe there's an element out there that go to at extreme." He whistles through his teeth. e tells me how two years ago he was manning booth at a local bow festival when a man proached him to report that he knew what e Game Commission was up to because his other personally knew the pilot who'd flown e helicopter that had lowered several moun-in lions onto the game lands. Amused, he rums his fingers on the steering wheel. Maybe they kicked them out of the helicopter. ats always land on their feet, right?"

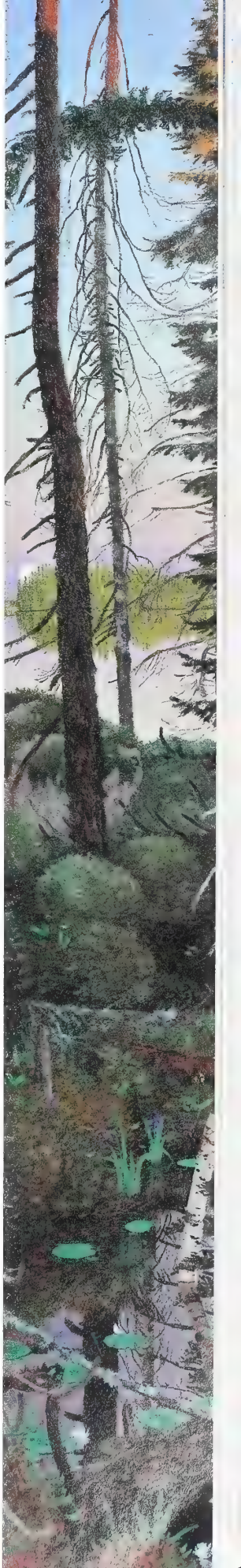
Just ahead, leaves explode in a plume of con-tti when a giant black bird drops heavily out of tree, gaining altitude belatedly; another twelve thirteen of its comrades, wicked black beasts ith wingspans as wide as the truck, burst up out the ferns. When Williams stops at a pit sur-unded by snow fence, the last few bold turkey ultures join the roost of ghouls regarding us from ie branches overhead.

"This is what I call the bird feeder," he says. The boneyard. You may want to stay inside, it's little smelly out there." But I get out and stand y the edge of the pit, without offering to help ith the deer. Its eyes are still vivid green. The round is covered with bird shit, and the stink is unbearable, but maybe less so than the unnatural image of so much jumbled death: rib cages and skulls picked clean and nondescript mammalia all dissolving into the same colorless gray mush. When he tosses the deer on top of the heap its tenacious vibrancy—its life hues—glow stubbornly against the utter monochrome of death.

By mid-afternoon, we're trundling through Game Lands #13—50,000 acres of happy hunting grounds. He's telling me he gets probably twenty cougar sightings a year, and how, when he first started at the Game Commission, he was more inclined to investigate, whereas today he's not going to give it much priority. Ninety percent of the time, he says, they happen to people in cars at dusk. A fulvous, long-tailed blur crossing the road. A slinking specter in the fading light.

## Leaves explode in a plume of confetti when a giant black bird drops out of a tree

Then, struck with a fresh idea, he says that if there's anyone out there more apt to see a mountain lion than himself, it's gonna be the Food and Cover guys. They're out here every day. Unlike him, the Food and Cover guys—the division of the Game Commission responsible for keeping the resident game species (and thereby hunters) fat and happy—spend most of their time on foot. They plant clover for rabbits and fruit and nut trees for bears, and they cut browse for deer and maintain roads and stuff like that. A mile later, he turns down a drive that ends at a giant shed, where there's a bulldozer parked cockeyed on a hill of gravel, a few big trucks, and some muddy farm equipment. We're greeted by the maintenance supervisor and two other men loading bags of seed onto a tractor. Williams tells them that I'm doing a story about the sightings, and he smiles to let them know that he thinks it's pucky, but within five minutes, without the faintest hint of irony, all three Food and Cover guys avow their belief that mountain lions, without doubt, exist in these woods. All three have a mountain-lion story. One knows of a horse killed. The youngest guy, wearing an oil-stained shirt, saw a lion with a cub not a week ago. And the supervisor, with twenty-seven years in the Game Commission, told us that the winter before, while cutting browse for deer, he'd seen five-inch pugmarks in the snow; the way they skittered and darted and jumped under and over fallen logs looked to him like a cat tracking mice. "I know they're here," he said. Williams stands mute, with his hand resting on the butt of his pistol.





Back in the truck, heading out of the game lands, the radio muttering like a voice trying to [illegible] Williams gradually emerges from his baffled silence to regroup the argument. He exhales quickly.

What he will concede, as will his superiors, is that there very well could be a few escaped or released mountain lions running around in the woods. "People do own mountain lions. They

## Using the same viselike instrument, they put another tattoo in the bear's crotch

own panthers and tigers and lions and everything else." Strangely enough, the Game Commission is the agency that sells these exotic pet permits in the first place and that enforces the regulations under which mountain lions, tigers, cheetahs, leopards, emus, prairie dogs, eagles, muntjacs, coyotes, coatimundi, lynx, bobcats, monkeys, macaws, camels, buffalo, lemurs, kangaroos, yaks and coyotes, zebras, giraffes, alpacas, elephants, wolves, servals, and bears may be kept. It is not hard to imagine how, on occasion, the difficulties of keeping a 200-pound carnivore might lead to an owner "accidentally" leaving the gate open one night. Wildlife agents say that this explains the few non-hallucinatory sightings: escapees from roadside petting zoos, exotic pets on the lam. It is also suspected that ecowarriors of the Earth Liberation Front ilk may have set some of the animals free to help reintroduce a critical species to the eastern woods. Given the ease with which one can buy a cougar in, say, Florida, it isn't hard to imagine an idealistic young man in Texas and an EarthFirst! shirt trundling down a dirt road in a pickup with a mysteriously canvas-cloaked crate. Ted Turner, the green-spirited media mogul, was fined $1,500 in 1988 for releasing cougars onto his Florida plantation. The cougar also is reputed to be a favored pet among strippers and drug dealers. Such are the unlikely allies of this charismatic megafauna.

"I can't tell you that there's not a tiger running around out here. What I'm saying is, as far as any sort of reproducing mountain lions—it's not happening." As for the escapees, Williams says, captive-bred animals are ill equipped to survive in the wild. "If that's not taught, you know, in the wild state, the chances of survival aren't very good." His eyes thicken over the passing woods. "Maybe instinct isn't enough."

On another mountain, this time in Kentucky, on the dead heart of July, I watch a bear slip into unconsciousness. I sit on a fallen l short distance away, not really giving a shit, sm the cigarette in the hope that it will drive a the biting midges. This is the only place whe could arrange to meet Dave Maehr, the erstwl Florida panther expert, now professor of con vation biology at the University of Kentuc where he is immersed (with an environmen writing class in tow) in a bear study for the st As with mountain lions, bears were pushed of Kentucky by 1850, but their recent hor coming is a phenomenon that shows there is deed vacancy for large predators in the East. T undergrads, with their enthusiasm and open no books, make me feel fraudulent and auraless not being able to get past the disappoint realness of the moment: the disappointing re ness of the bear. In part, I chalk up the diminish grandeur of the bear's nature to the boxy radio c lar around its neck, the long red-and-wh streamers in its ears, the green ink still foam from a fresh tattoo stamped inside its lip, and t purple bandanna blindfold.

The students diligently observe every det of the sleeping bear, stroking its bristly fur, haling its rooty musk, bravely touching the p of its massive paws, its claws, crouching down observe it from every possible creative angle, n ing the way it drools, the way the dirt skitt beneath its nostrils, making deft little sketches the margins of their well-bound notebooks. Tl ask good questions. One cute nineteen-year-c in a pink coral necklace—a wad of chewing t bacco tucked ironically in her cheek—wants know the dimension of the bear's testicles. (T biologist crouched down with calipers tells h 8 x 4.5 cm.) The kinder students swat at inse hovering over its wounds, bite marks dealt out more dominant bears. Our bear, #15, is at t bottom of the totem pole, one of Maehr's aid says. I throw out that perhaps running arou the forest with bicycle streamers in its ears mig affect the status of the animal. To which the b ologist counters that the accessories only e hance its status in the eyes of its peers, and can't quite remember if it was before or after stopped laughing at this little joke that he spre open its legs to show us all the bear's "penis bon only to discover the vindictive bite marks and t nasty, raw gash in its groin. Using the same vis like instrument and bottle of green ink used to t too the bear's lip, they put another tattoo in crotch. Since bears have been found with the heads lopped off—by poachers, maybe, harve ing gallbladders for the black-market trade Asian aphrodisiacs—a mere tattoo in the mou is no longer adequate. Then, once #15 is bran ed, the biologist lifts its tail and thrusts a the mometer into my hand so that I might have t honor of inserting it up the bear's rectum.

ı a camo jacket, with cropped gray hair and
ed blue eyes, standing off to the side with a
propped on a half-rotten log, Maehr has the
and air of a colonel supervising triage. The
gun lies at his feet near a pile of moldering
ghnuts and an empty vial of tranquilizer,
ch says, in small print, DOGS AND CATS ONLY.
While his aides work over the bear and collect
r data, he fidgets calmly with a stick and talks
ne about the other, less visible animal. For
most part, he chalks up the sightings to folk-
. "It's like people in southern England who be-
e in the Beast of Bodmin Moor and the Sur-
Puma," he says. "There hasn't been a large
nivore in southern England since lynxes and
ves were eradicated five hundred years ago."
the most prominent scientist on the Eastern
ıgar Foundation's board of directors, Maehr
:s not for a second think eastern mountain
ıs survived the nineteenth-century persecution,
l he says the idea of a government conspiracy
ıdicrous. But, on the other hand, like a lot of
:p ecology thinkers, he would desperately like
ring them back.

'There's plenty people out there who say why
uld we want to bring something back that we
ght so hard to get rid of in the first place?" He
aks quietly so as not to wake the bear. "There's
nigh anxiety associated with big furry things
th sharp teeth. No doubt about it." But to
aehr and other biocentrists, the risk of cougar
acks on humans is infinitesimal compared with
e ways in which its restoration would redeem
e East's moribund ecosystem. The reintroduc-
n of the mountain lion would "dramatically"
prove the landscape itself.
his was seen in Yellowstone,
here the reintroduction of
olves had a direct and salutary
ect on vital flora such as as-
n and willow, two key tree
ecies for songbirds, decimated
elk until wolf packs redistrib-
ed the herds. "There are species in the tropics
at are dropping out because all the seeds are be-
g eaten by things like agoutis and capybaras
d tapirs and stuff like that. These are places that
e absent jaguar. They're absent mountain
n." And nature has become too complacent, he
inks, because it has lost that tension between
redator and prey.

He is not alone in his idealism. In fact,
utting meat eaters back in the forest is a cen-
al doctrine of the Wildlands Project—one of
ne fifty conservation groups that endorsed the
CF's similarity-of-appearance petition—a
topian blueprint hailed by Paul Ehrlich as "the
nly realistic strategy for ending the extinction
risis." The plan, to link and "rewild" vast but
agmented stretches of wilderness areas into
natural corridors (at the expense of a few interstates and suburban populations), would better facilitate movement among large carnivores across the landscape, permitting the game of evolution to flourish free of human intervention. Reed Noss, the chief scientist of the Wildlands Project, told me that the cougar, specifically, will be the "key focal species for the rewilding of the entire Atlantic megalinkage."

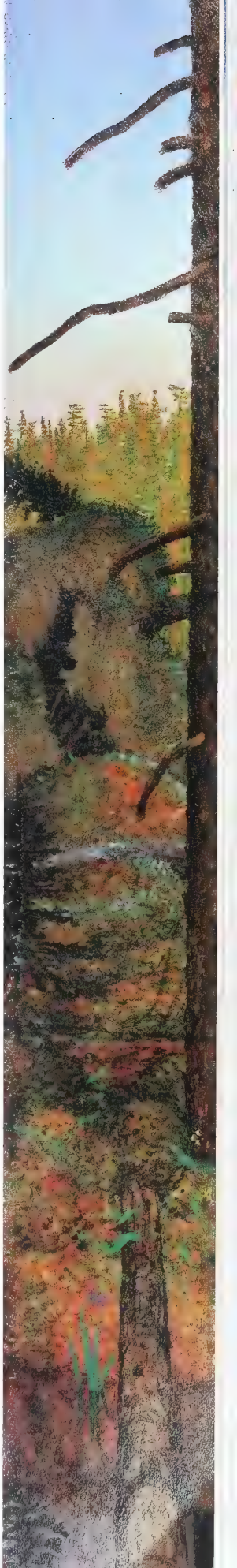
"It'd be very, very exciting to put some evolutionary forces back in the landscape," Maehr whispers. Even though he is enthused by the apparent phenomenon over the past ten years of mountain lions migrating from the West, it will be a long time, he says, if ever, before they make it this far on their own. The obstacles are nearly insurmountable. The only way a recovery effort will go forward is if something big enough—like the sudden and miraculous appearance of a breeding population—happens to force the hand of the wildlife agencies. "Once they were confronted with the reality of them being there," he says, "I think they would have no choice but to manage it responsibly."

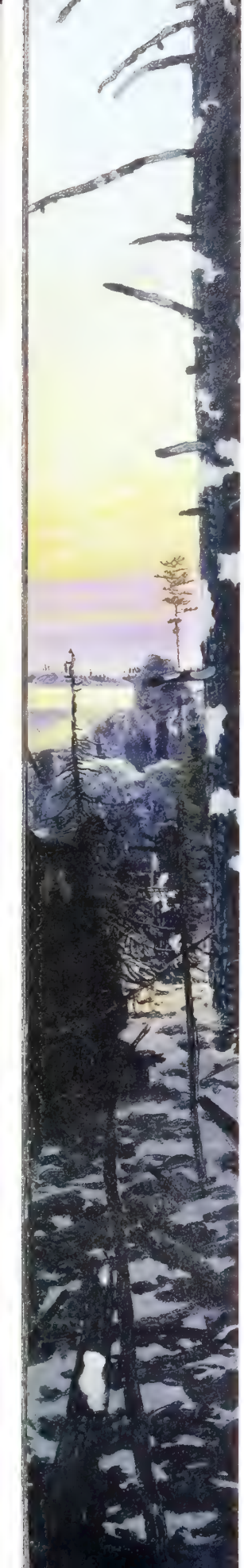
As former research supervisor of the Florida Panther Project, he knows a thing or two about the disharmony between biology and government. He proved not only that the Florida panther wasn't, as many had alleged, on the verge of extinction but that there was a larger population than formerly believed. His drive to make more and more daring captures, however, earned him a reputation as a cowboy who sometimes risked the lives of the cats he was trying to save, and his self-confessed tendency to butt heads with the other agency officials led to his abrupt resignation in 1994. He twiddles his stick and looks down at the bear; it languidly probes the ground with its bright green tongue. He's sure some of his former colleagues look at his association with the ECF and think he's gone off the deep end. "'Yeah, Maehr, he's become a real wacko now.'" He shrugs. "My credibility is shot with a lot of people anyway."

He stops briefly to ask, "What's the latest prognosis on Boo-boo?"

A few of the students are having their picture taken with the bear, holding up its heavy, sagging head for the flash. The staff are arguing about antibiotics.

"If we really wanted to pull it off, we could do it," Maehr says. "We'd find the people who would sell us the animals underhanded, and put 'em in crates, and drive them right across the state line. It'd be really easy. I mean, how many vehicles get pulled over just to see what's in the back of the truck? We're fortunately not yet at that police state that it looks like we're heading





toward more and more every day. But, yeah, I think it's ironic." He eyes the [illegible] brush and contemplates his own hypothetical stealth for a moment. "Morally, would it be a bad thing? No. Legally bad? Still. Morally, maybe, bad if the lion runs out and kills a human body." Whether or not human casualties would be worth a healthy ecosystem, he says, is a tricky semantic question. "Would I turn myself in after it happened if I were the one to do it? I don't know. I'm not willing to risk that myself. But there are other people independent enough that even if they got caught they could withstand the jail time and the fine that'd be levied on them, and they'd be viewed as a hero by a lot of people."

However noble Maehr views the restoration of large carnivores, he has no plans to do it himself (at least, none that he will admit). But the more he speaks, the more I understand that the question is not whether the panther is already here but how soon can we put it back. And not only that, but why, in this declawed world, where deer have become less paranoid, does it seem that we steadily grow more paranoid? The reason, he says, echoing the words of the philosopher Paul Shepard, is that despite our tall glass buildings and our ability to subjugate other creatures, *we* are still wild animals ourselves.

"We've become domestic but not domesticated," he says, toeing a semi-glazed doughnut. The faint drone of insects is lulling. "We still have all the wild emotions and the hormonal responses—jealousy, raging emotions—that we would have if we were living in Africa in the Pleistocene. But, like deer, I think the loss of certain senses—like when you're out in the open you're probably always looking over your shoulder waiting for some pack of hyenas to come eat your ass—those things have diminished in us. But that doesn't make us unwild. It's because you're a wild animal and you've been put into a situation that your species didn't evolve to handle. We get overloaded. [illegible] responding to these stimuli." He gestures as if it is all filtering down on us through the trees. "We've been hammered into this very unnatural setting where we can't control ourselves anymore. Somebody walking to work with an automatic weapon killing people, what's the selective advantage to that?" The fear is chasing something in its sleep, weakly kicking a hind leg. "And we choose to buy into the technology, into the comfort and calories, the entertainments that go with that. And that increases our dysfunction. It increases our pathology. There are times I feel anxious and don't know what the fuck I'm even anxious about. I think we're living in a society, in a time, when we've made everything so artificial that we've become crazy."

Since I grew up in the country, in mountains like these, as an adolescent blessed with the wilderness of privacy in which to escape and think my dark poet-stoner thoughts, I have proceeded under the pastoral fantasy that if things turned out badly enough in real life, I could always just strike out into the woods, build a shelter, and live out my days as a happy savage. There, in the sacrosanct wilderness, my pure and incorruptible true nature, that original primal thing, whatever it is, my undeviated will, my inner *wildor*, my instinctual self, would remain intact. It is only now that my mistake occurs to me, as I look at the idiotic bear, blinkfolded, ears beribboned and tongue and crotch painted like a circus animal that's been hazed out of its stupor by the monkeys. An odd welcome home for a beast that is, until the return of the Machtando, interregnum king of our forest, Lear playing the fool.

My mistake was to believe in wilderness in the first place. The instinctual self stands no more chance in these fairy-tale woods where the few curious animals that aren't already dead are on the fast track to extinction—or getting by on clover planted by friendly Food and Cover guys—live out an existence under surveillance on camera, wired for sound, tracked by plane, auscultated weekly, mined for data, and for all I know probed remotely from outer space. It is not only that the eastern panther may exist solely in our minds. The truth is, there is no wilderness; wilderness itself is extinct.

It is no more real than those archetypal bears chasing us down in our dreams, visions of a species that has disowned its wild nature, that has, in essence, merely surrendered to a life of captivity. Trapped, our instincts in the dark, banished to a life lived underground, we nourish ourselves with visions of a paradise lost that, brought into daylight would crumble. But perhaps if we *unbanish* the monsters, we might, one day, restore our own lost wild selves.

*Even if Maehr, in the end, is not willing to risk jail for the sake of biodiversity, the subversive writings of his friend Dave Foreman, the father of EarthFirst! (and co-founder of the Wildlands Project), may have already inspired releases. Roger Cowburn related one incident when he'd been contacted by a young ecowarrior with plans to set a mountain lion free in the East. At first, the relationship was purely informational. But then, after the ecowarrior was robbed in a nightclub, he called back asking for money. Sometime after Roger turned him in, the man called John Eats-the-Heart-of-Newborn-Babies, in search of a human target. I [illegible] note, one Sunday afternoon shortly after my visit to Kentucky, while visiting a cougar sanctuary, standing close enough to an eight-foot-long, 200-pound male that I could feel its purr rumbling in my sternum, I found myself nearly talked into becoming an accomplice to a release. Persuasive are the great cat lovers.)*

# DEVIL'S WORK

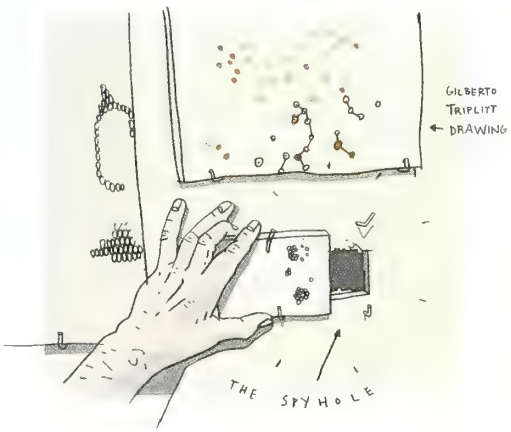
## Secret doings at the Queens Museum of Art

*By Morgan Meis*

**AY ONE**

We're doing absolutely nothing. I sit the floor in an orange jumpsuit designed for this occasion, with twenty-ur other people also wearing orange mpsuits. I catch Stefany's eye for a oment and then Jean's, and we smile one another because it feels nice, exting even, to be in the midst of our st day. We will spend seven hours a ay in this room for the next three onths. "What are we trying to do oday?" Jason "Funky" Brown asks me a few museumgoers wander in with me trepidation and then scurry out. Not much," I reply. "Not much all is week and maybe into next week oo." "That's good," he says, looking lly and overstuffed in his jumpsuit. You have to let it take its time." He anders off to another corner of the oom and I continue to sit there, crossegged, my hands folded in my lap.

We're at the Queens Museum of Art. People generally come to this museum, if they come at all, for the Panorama. The Queens Museum is in Flushing, in the middle of Flushing Meadows/Corona Park near the Tennis Center, where the U.S. Open is played, and down the way from Shea Stadium. It's a long walk from the 7 train and separated from the rest of Flushing by the network of highways that Robert Moses cooked up when he was beating New York City into something new. At the center of the museum squats the Panorama, a giant 9,335-square-foot scale model of the entirety of New York City, all five boroughs, commissioned by Robert Moses himself. The Panorama includes hundreds of thousands of tiny buildings, the




buildings of New York City. Out in the Flushing section of the model there is even a model of the Queens Museum itself, and as your gaze sweeps across the whole of the city it can pause at the museum and watch itself in a moment of solipsism. The Panorama is, in a sense, the soul of the museum. I imagine those who work here must dream about the Panorama sometimes. There isn't much you can do with it; it just sits there, decade after decade. That's what produces the glimmer of melancholy about the museum, and the moldering remnants of past World's Fairs scattered around the park produce more of the same. It isn't a sad place, but it's quiet and filled with memories as well as the sense that some things have simply been forgotten.

We spend the last forty-five minutes of the day having a group nap in one of the corners of the room, a mass of orange limbs, and then go home.

**DAY NINE**

We, the members of Flux Factory, have been coming in every day for more than a week. We have a room just past the entrance of the museum where we are expected to do something every day and keep doing it until the International Show is over in three months. We've been invited to participate in the show because we're an art collective and we live in Queens. The idea we pitched was that we would create a living artwork that would grow and change and build over the course of the show. We would call it a "Fluxture."

We exercise this morning because we have decided to exercise every morning. The guards and the old ladies at the gift shop were suspicious at first, but now they expect it to happen. Maybe they even like that it happens. Lisa, one of the guards, asks us what kind of exercises we'll do today. "We do strong ones," Aya, Jean's girlfriend, says, and proceeds to lead us through a series of vigorous jerkings like the ones Japanese autoworkers do every morning. She scrunches up her girl-

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Illustrations by Olivier Kugler

ese for fifteen minutes until we fall to the floor, gasping and sweaty. I am fat tish, and Funky is fatter still. Jean Bar- room and watch us trying to live up to the rigors of being Japanese. After the cameras and video projectors and still cameras and recording and documenting and displaying the footage of past days on the walls. The footage being displayed generally consists of footage of ourselves taking footage of ourselves. Thus arises the inevitable problem of what it all really means and where it might go. Being forced to ask that question is part of the whole point of the project, but we all disagree about the answer and secretly doubt our own conclusions.

Dana Gianquitto lies on the floor of the room taking pinhole camera pictures of me sitting in the corner with a typewriter. I am writing about the fact that she is taking pictures of me with her camera. Stefany is standing on a stool trying to get one of the video cameras to work properly, a camera that is pointed down at Dana and me capturing moments with each other. Sally Hership has come in for a few hours to record some of our thoughts and collect bits of our hair and fingerprints. Even she, a part of the project, wonders aloud to me, "But what, really, is this thing?" "It's just all of this, and it's just getting started anyway," I reply. She smiles down at me, being tall and kind, and the day proceeds.

At around two o'clock Hitomi Iwasaki, the museum's associate curator, comes down from the offices upstairs and blasts into the room, her usual mode of entrance. It had become clear to us from early on that Hitomi is one of those rare people in whom trust and exasperation can exist simultaneously. She sits down next to Jean and me in such a way that we are both convinced she will never stand up again. And then she stands up again. You ought to take a person like that pretty seriously. She seems to have lost patience with the relationship we've been cultivating with noth- and small on the floor next to me. I have preferred that we answered, "No, we're not doing anything. We're going to sit in this room for two more sometimes also the punishment. But then, to call it in terms of tragedy is certainly overwrought. Yet it's moments like this—in the empty room with Hitomi, that start things, and places that hadn't been anticipated.

A few minutes after she leaves we begin to build. Timothy Don, who manages to look strong and handsome in his jumpsuit, Stefany, and I start to carry in metal beams from storage and fit them together with nuts and bolts. It's like a modernist barn-raising, with the industrial building materials and the weird bronze glowing against the stark white walls. We now have an open metal box in the room. It's slightly taller than a person and large enough for four. To this we add more cameras and more VCRs and more pictures of ourselves and more pictures of it. We're filling the room up with itself, as it were. And we're making the thing have a history, a history consciously presented. Now you can walk into the room and see that something was going on and had been going on for some time. It's a start, but it's a tense one because there simply isn't a clear idea as to what will be created in the room or what the structure will be for.

At the day's end, Jean and Stefany and I stand around in the World's Fair section of the museum and commiserate while Funky does a "nap performance" in artist Emily Jacir's Palestinian tent, which sits in the room next to ours and commemorates villages destroyed in 1948. "I love this room, but I hate the room," Jean says. "We have to extend the room," Stefany says. Jean and I agree, but none of us is sure what that really means.

DAY TWENTY

We cut the ribbon this mornin ceremonious music compo by Stefany. We'll mend it tonigh music and then do the s the next day and every day f now on. We chat with Andre, an the guards, who's fond of stroll into the room and saying, "You kn literally like this. I'm not sure w it is, but it's different." We have cut the ribbon this morning. It's goal to have someone different cut mend the ribbon every morning evening, but there are so few visit that our videotapes show basically same five or six security guards p forming our ceremonies day after d We take daily tea at 1:30 on the n seum lawn and serve it to anyone w happens to be around, after Hito suggested it might be a good way for to interact with the public. Most the time there's not much "arou around, but every once in a while convince some person passing by museum to have tea with us. We taken hours of footage of the guar desk with a surveillance camera, a today we project the footage out fr our room onto a wall of the museu and the guards stand around and lau at themselves doing the things th they do every day. Laura from the e ucation department brings a group special-needs adults into our room a tells them that they can touch ever thing and that the whole thing is a including us. Several of her studen seem pleased by this idea, and one sit ply begins to cry.

In the afternoon, Jean covers himse in double-sided tape, and Stefany a I collect a number of random objec and blow up a hundred or so balloon We do this to benefit another group, children's group this time, bein brought by the education departmen Stefany dubs our educational art proje "Sticky Friend." Soon, a gaggle begi to filter into the room. "Just stick thes things right on him," Stefany tel them. "He's your Sticky Friend." A first they are somewhat trepidatiou but soon it becomes a rampage as the crazily affix balloons and stuffed anima to Jean's face. Children collide an bounce off one another in their gle to stick more things on Jean. Thei laughter becomes indistinguishabl

shrieking; they can't really control selves. A crowd of guards and mu- employees gathers round watch- he spectacle. Richie, the head of iscellaneous things at the museum, ges past with a can of paint, as sed at the sight as he is anxious to way from it.

he end of the day is quiet. Dana s a long exposure of the room with homemade camera, and Stefany I try to capture something of it all daily log, I on my old mechanical writer that beats out a soundtrack hose hours and she with a pen. re is something sweet and calm in




e room, and the few museumgoers o come by merely peek their heads for a moment, seemingly in respect something that ought not be dis- rbed. The room is cluttered now with ages and texts and objects and a met- structure that has grown from a sim- e box to a series of open rooms and ires and strings hanging everywhere. is even a little dangerous, and Stefany alks around the room taping up sharp rners and beams in order to give em a little padding.

For the last half hour of the day we ght. Not about anything in particu- r but just because of the tensions al- ays lingering under the surface from eing in this room hour after hour, day fter day. "Don't put that tape there," I say to Stefany, who looks back at me slowly and continues to wrap the beam in tape. Stefany is mad at Jean and me because we disagree with her about the next part of the structure to be built, and I am mad at Stefany and Jean because they don't do things the way I want them to. Jean looks like an idiot because we had to cut half his hair off in order to get the tape out from Sticky Friend. We do the closing ceremony and leave, separately.

**DAY THIRTY-THREE**

Today we're going to tunnel into the walls of the museum. We had thought about extending the room, and we had joked about different ways of doing it. But suddenly today feels like the day to do it. There is enough in the room already, and we have been here for many, many days. Maybe it is simply an escape act. More than that, the Fluxture is simply growing of its own accord. It might also be because the walls of the museum are so thick you have to wonder what's inside them. Perhaps there's no way to fully explain it, and that is what makes the idea exciting and somewhat frightening. I say to Jean, "Let's create a false tunnel in the room and then use it to cut into the real wall." He says, "Of course." Stefany says, "I wonder how far we could tunnel into the museum?" All three of us wonder about that. "We can't tell anyone else about it," Stefany says, "not even the other Fluxers." Jean and I agree. "We'll leave hints though," Jean says. "Okay," I say, "we'll leave hints." And that is the end of the discussion. It had simply become obvious that we must tunnel into the walls of the Queens Museum of Art in Flushing Meadows/Corona Park, home of the great Panorama.

First we build a small chamber against the wall and within the metal box that was the first structure we made. The room is so built up that it isn't even noticeable. Jean and Stefany take extra care to bang around in the room a good deal, and I crawl inside the chamber and saw a hole through the south wall. I do it slowly with a crappy little knife that Jean loans me, and it takes forever. I stop every time someone comes into the room or I hear the rush of Hitomi on one of her rounds. After an hour or so there is a person-sized hole in the wall. I pull the last piece of drywall away and crawl into a new world. The walls of the Queens Museum of Art are so wide that they hide what is essentially a series of smaller, skinnier rooms that house the infrastructure. No one realizes what we are doing and no one is bothered by the noise. Jean and Stefany and I take turns crawling into the tunnel and just sitting in there. We try to tunnel through an internal wall within the tunnel that might lead farther into the museum innards, but it lands us at a concrete wall. We have tunneled into a secret room barely wider than a person, lined with the studs that hold up the walls and topped by the ductwork for the central-air system. The question now is what to do with it. I create a small peephole into our main room, and we cover it with a picture of Seb—an absent Fluxer—with a hole in his right eye that we can peek out. "We just secretly tunneled into the walls of the Queens Museum of Art," Stefany says as we leave.

**DAY THIRTY-FOUR**

We gather some nice fabric, a clarinet, a balalaika, a toy phonograph, a mounted deer's head, a chandelier, glasses, and some aged tequila for the new tunnel room. It is agreed that the secret room should contrast in decadence with the stark environs of the room outside and the rest of the museum. We agree that the room should be kept secret from everyone else in the group. It will be part of the evolving complexity of everything happening at the museum, but we start taking pictures of ourselves in the room and leaving various hints and clues of what we have done in full public view. We start a scrapbook called "Devil's Work" about these secret doings and leave it out in the room among the other scrapbooks we have for people to look at. We have pictures of ourselves in the secret room posted up on the walls outside, but there are so many pictures now that no one ever bothers to figure

the secret room, which he has now dubbed the Kissing Booth, playing old 45s on the tiny phonograph, sipping tequila, and doodling in his notebook. Other Fluxers show up to work in the outside room, and I feel that some faculty of their mind is trying to let them know whether they are hearing Lani music coming from nowhere. But the mind has a liking for coherence, and we find that it is very difficult to get anyone to notice our new activities. Funky is working on a computer in the room, and I can hear him humming softly to a Johnny Cash tune coming from the Kissing Booth. "What are you humming?" I ask him, feeling simultaneously nervous and brazen. He thinks for a moment. "I don't know."

In a sense, we have switched around the relations in the room. For weeks we had been completely exposed, objects at the mercy of whatever public might filter through. Now, with the Kissing Booth and its spy holes and the layers of secrecy, everything has doubled over on itself, and we can just step into the tunnel and morph from an object into a subject and back again. Jean and Stefany and I scurry in and out of that tunnel all day long just to experience the transformation.

We spend the last part of the day standing at the top of the ramp that loops around the Panorama, just watching it and reflecting. The lights go off every fifteen minutes or so for a minute or two in order to simulate night falling on New York City. The whole museum is starting to feel like an occasion for the extension of our room now, with the Panorama smack in the center

**DAY THIRTY-SEVEN**

One of the problems with the world, and one of the interesting things about the world, is the way limits and possibilities interact. Breaking through the




In the afternoon I rig up a piece of our metal building material as a ramp from one part of the structure to another so that a ball can roll down it and onto the floor. A simple act of motion. But it makes me realize that if the ball can be released from within the room it can also be released with a string from within the Kissing Booth. The implications are exciting. It means that Stefany and Jean and I can sit in the Kissing Booth and, using a system of pulleys and gadgets, make all kinds of things happen in the room. We begin to contemplate the possibility of

Over the next few hours the room becomes a network of rolling and dropping objects, of released balloons and secret messages and squirting water bottles and fans. All this we control from

up to every camera in the room Kissing Booth has become a con chamber for kinetic chaos. On the hand, it is exhilarating to sit in Booth and know that you are in c plete control of a secret Art Toy t has totally transformed the room, by extension the museum, but on other hand infuriating that you c tell anyone about it. The problem, quickly realize, is that it is a mach all revved up with nowhere to go. most consistent audience has been seum employees, and can't unleash the trap on of them since it might to the discovery of our t neling. The booby traps to waiting and the wait leads rather ignominiou to boredom, a tense bo dom but boredom nonet less. There are high m ments. We amuse seve people who don't stay in room long enough for u activate much but who sn at the dropping ball or sliding disks. A man w into the room while t three of us are in the Kiss Booth and slowly makes way around. I manically g a few wires and send m disks sliding around o track and then dropping the floor. He stops a watches. Stefany clicks different m itors off and on in the room, lett him know that he's being tracked our cameras. She pulls a wire that sh some cans tied together and Jean leases a few balloons. Now the ma truly alarmed. Jean flips a switch t turns a fan on and blows a whole re of paper down from a higher level. T man watches this happen for a f more moments and then abruptly tu and runs from the room and leaves t museum. We have frightened him. T was not the intent of course, but we achieved something more delight than we had ever initially imagine

Except that it has already beco boring and empty. The only way to farther in this direction would be to tually hurt someone, and we are ge erally peaceful artists. The only thi left to do is penetrate farther into t museum. One way to do this is sim

farther, to extend the tunnel or nnel elsewhere. But another way think about different senses of erm "penetrate." We now know back stairway and passageway entrance and exit to the entire um. We've been everywhere, and familiarity has given us, essen-, complete access. The only way ve an honest portrayal of the sit-n is to say that we have taken ad-age of our situation, which is to say we have taken advantage of the and the genuine friendship we built with all the people at the um. But at the same time we're at-d to the impishness of the muse-director, Tom Finkelpearl, and to ntensity of Hitomi. We've spent with museum employees like Car- and Debra at Bryant Park helping note the museum for CultureFest taping one another to trees and ta- and each other. And we have al-s felt that Tony and Richie and speak for something of the guards' ngs when they simply sit at the and chuckle to themselves at our hinations within the room and out. A certain extension of our nse isn't merely immanent to our ject; it is immanent to the general d of the place, a collection of most-kable people working together in lf-forgotten corner of Queens sur-nded by good but not terribly im-tant or sought-after art.

At the end of the day it is raining, I always feel that the place be-nes most what it is on rainy days. I k around the museum with Stefany, l we can hear every footstep, and white walls seem like they're a lit-wet from all the dampness in the air. is is when the isolation and melan-ly are most obvious, but there is something good and human about place that you don't get at every in-ution, to be sure. We come back d sit on the floor of our room again, d I'm clacking at the typewriter while fany talks to Dorothy, one of the rds, about her life, and Jean sits in Kissing Booth letting off a balloon turning on the fan every now and ain, though no one notices.

**AY FORTY-NINE**

This morning we grab a few cans of ange paint, some paint rollers, and a number of cinder blocks from a back room and put them on a dolly. Stefany and I roll them across the museum to the back stairway that leads to the roof. It seems like a long way from the back room across from the guard's desk to the other side of the museum where the access to the roof is. We bump into Richie along the way, and we exchange a glance and a word or two that says, "I know that you're doing something stupid, but you know what you're doing, and we're all far beyond the place where anyone is going to police you." And that is pretty much the truth. We carry the stuff up to the roof using a pulley mechanism Jean rigged up for the cinder blocks, and we stand on the vast roof of the museum looking out all the way to Manhattan. It is a spectacular vista. And it is directly in the flight path of planes coming into and out of LaGuardia airport. We have managed to transport a number of museum materials, which are certainly not ours to transport, to a location that is without question not to be accessed, and also we have brought a tent.

We paint a huge message on the roof for the planes taking off from LaGuardia. It reads, PERSONS IN PLANES PLEASE CALL 718-707-3362, which is the Flux Factory business line. Then we put up the tent using the cinder blocks as supports. It is a miniature colonization and a gesture at communication. We put a message on our answering machine later that asks persons calling from planes to leave an address so we can send them an art prize. We sit up in our tent for a while and watch the jetliners come down across the park and disappear into the trees as they land. The people in the planes flying by are looking down at us and the landscape that stretches out from the park in the same way that we stand around the Panorama in the evenings watching the whole city in miniature. Later, I go downstairs and make a video describing to people how to get up on the roof and visit our little tent, and leave it among a number of tapes we have out at a viewing station. We resolve to sleep in the tent one night and to leave it up there until the day someone finds it and takes it away.

**DAY FIFTY-SEVEN**

This afternoon we embark on the time-capsule project. The idea is to extend our stay at the museum. It comes out of something Jean says about our various incursions. "This is our permanent exhibition," he says, and there is a wonderful sound to that idea. Stefany picks up on that immediately, that we are also stretching the temporal boundaries of our stay at the museum. She and I start stuffing things into little boxes and tubes and balls of fabric. We date things and explain them. We make video- and audiotapes for people who might be at the museum years from now. "People of the future," I say on one of the tapes, "you have discovered a secret project of Flux Factory, who once lived in this museum in the fall of 2002." Stefany sings sweetly into a cassette. I can't hear what the lyrics are, and I don't know where she goes to hide it. Over the weeks we had noticed how many nooks and crannies there are to the museum, how many empty spaces. We decide to fill them up. We climb up into trap doors and down into shafts, behind stairwells and into ductwork. Everywhere we leave these little packages for the future. We decide to keep making more and more of these capsules. When we walk around the museum now Stefany will nudge me or Jean will nudge me or vice versa and just point at a crevice or a door or a ledge, and then later one of us will walk by as nonchalantly as possible and stuff a capsule there when no one is looking. I'm absolutely certain that people will be finding them years from now, maybe decades. In some of the places we leave mini-installations, small representations of the Fluxture, stashed into the farthest, deepest reaches of the museum. I imagine some of those things will never be found. I don't even remember where half the things are anymore.

**DAY SIXTY-EIGHT**

Our gaze is greedy. The entire museum has become our Fluxture.

The room next to ours is full of drawings by the artist Gilberto Triplitt. There are roughly thirty of these sketches, all of varying sizes and composed of tight, obsessive circles. Jean sits down on the floor and makes a smallish replica of one of these drawings. It's a passable work. We decide to hang it on the wall next to the real

drawings. There is, of course, the distinct possibility that someone will notice the addition, perhaps the artist himself. But by this point the logic of "augmentation" has become its own justification. Jean and I simply walk over to the wall and nail it on. Its real purpose, however, is slightly more subtle: to cover a small hole in the wall that we are going to make.

Later, Jean and Stefany begin a new tunnel. The tunnel starts near an emergency exit in the direction of the bathrooms, and we think it will lead into a between-the-walls room similar to the Kissing Booth but within the wall on which Mr. Triplitt's drawings hang. Alas, no two tunnels are the same, and this one is fitted with an internal wall of wood and Sheetrock that prevents our accessing the back side of Mr. Triplitt's wall. We realize that we'll need to cut through the wood and Sheetrock in order to get farther into the tunnel and behind the wall of drawings. Once inside that wall, it will be possible to cut a spy hole under the fake drawing Jean put up. We must extend the tunnels and we must create more spy holes, lines of sight from the infrastructure of the museum out to all the public spaces.

**DAY SEVENTY-THREE**

Jean and Stefany are alone in the Fluxture today. It is a quiet day, but then again most days are quiet. The plan is this: After a perfunctory opening ceremony, Stefany is to make a great deal of noise in our room, to turn on every noisemaking item and type noisily and continuously. This noise is to cover up the sound of Jean gutting a hole in the wall with an electric sawing tool, a Sawzall. The Sawzall is a bit of a monster and has been brought to the museum surreptitiously for precisely this purpose. It is designed to cut through walls. The plan has the distinct disadvantage that the sound of the Sawzall is the loudest sound that has ever existed anywhere. Jean is supposed to wait for a signal before he starts, but there really is no proper moment to begin sawing away at the internal walls of a museum. Also, the toy walkie-talkies Jean and Stefany use to communicate are not of the highest quality. Stefany's desper-

[illegible] "Wow, I [illegible] some audience [illegible] the loudest sound in the world is [illegible] just keeps typing, politely trying to pretend not to hear the loudest sound in my world as [illegible] through the museum walls and she keeps glancing up, expecting to see museum staff rushing in to find out what is going on. But you don't investigate what you don't even recognize as a possibility, and many things are often happening in an institution without everyone knowing where or why. So the staff continue to go about their own business, and the saw screams and moans and rattles for a few more minutes. Unable to hear the "Stop, stop, it's too loud," Jean just keeps on chopping and Stefany keeps on typing, and within a few minutes there is a new hole and a new tunnel.

A bit later, Jean goes back into the tunnel and works his way to the spot where he makes the new peephole behind the fake drawing. We decide to tell Seb about some of the secrets. The pressure to tell someone is just too great, and the fact that his own picture was the "cover" for our first peephole is too delicious. In fact, Jean has come dangerously close to letting Seb in on the secrets over the past few weeks, but it seemed almost impossible to do. "How do you subtly suggest to someone that we may have tunneled into the walls of the museum, created a secret spy hole, and covered it with a picture of his face?" I asked Jean. He didn't have an answer. Stefany tells Seb to stand in front of the wall of drawings, and as he does, Jean, who is in the new secret room, slides the fake drawing aside and Seb can see Jean's eyeball peeking through the wall. Seb turns back to Stefany and me with a look on his face that is difficult to describe, a mix of shock, terror, and admiration.

**DAY EIGHTY-TWO**

Today we decide to enter ourselves retroactively into history. We've devised an alteration to a model of the 1964 World's Fair that sits on a circular table just outside the entrance to the Panorama. Corona Park was, in fact, expressly built for the purpose of hosting the [illegible] World's Fair. The model, which [illegible] protected by a Plexiglas dome, shows [illegible] all the pavilions around the [illegible] ground from 1964. One thing it [illegible] not show is the Flux Factory [illegible] ion. A screwdriver, a small box, [illegible] tiny flag are the means to rectify [illegible] that. Afterward I make a clue [illegible] leading to the model. I take a picture [illegible] of the model with our new pavilion [illegible] and tape it under another exhibit [illegible] about the World's Fair close to the [illegible] model. Then I take a picture of that [illegible] picture under that exhibit and tape [illegible] it under a bench in the next room [illegible] the museum. Then I take another [illegible] picture of that picture and so forth, [illegible] tack the last picture up on the Flux[illegible] ture so that, conceivably, one could [illegible] follow the picture clues from room [illegible] room all the way around the museum [illegible] to the model alteration. Stefany, [illegible] Jean and I agree that altering the [illegible] model was preparation, as it were, for [illegible] the Panorama.

**DAY EIGHTY-EIGHT**

We've discovered how to get [illegible] der and onto the Panorama. This, [illegible] of course, a transgression of the highest order. If there is one thing at the [illegible] museum that verges on the sacred, [illegible] is the Panorama. And that is what [illegible] makes it irresistible. This evening, [illegible] just before closing Jean takes his [illegible] shoes off and goes out onto the [illegible] Panorama with a small model of a [illegible] building given to us by John Nash[illegible] wood. John is the only other artist [illegible] showing in the international exhibit [illegible] who ever comes to the museum regularly. He has a wall full of architectural models made from the detritus [illegible] of the material he used as a model [illegible] builder for I. M. Pei. John's exhibit [illegible] consists of an infinity of tiny impossible buildings of which no engineer [illegible] would ever approve, with even tiny [illegible] Playboy bunnies sitting nonchalantly [illegible] atop them. It's like a strange Utopia [illegible] inhabited by the cast of *Benny Hill*. [illegible] We are always very happy to see [illegible] John, tugging at his cigarette and [illegible] showing us the peculiar graphs and [illegible] tables he made about his trips to Europe decades earlier. He likes to say, [illegible] "I'm very lucky, I have a good life." [illegible] isn't a very profound statement, but [illegible] I've never heard anyone say it like

and in the way that you know it
e true. Jean takes the Norwood
ding and places it roughly on the
in College Point, Queens, where
has his studio. If such a building
exist in College Point, Queens, it
ld be a marvel; it's larger than
model of the Statue of Liberty.
n, in an unplanned moment of
iration on his way back, he grabs
oat from the Hudson River and
ries off the Panorama. We drive
the museum out to the far West
of upper Manhattan. Jean holds
boat out of the window of the car
shoots a video of it traversing the
ets and bridges from Queens to
nhattan. It is Stefany's thinking
the boat should be returned to




e actual Hudson River at about the
ot where Jean removed it from the
odel. We park and walk out onto
e rocks. Jean writes, IF FOUND,
EASE RETURN TO THE QUEENS MUSE-
M OF ART on the side of the boat.
e attach it to a piece of Styrofoam
nd toss it out onto the water. The
n is extremely bright as it sets. At
st the boat just bobs along. Then it
atches a current and disappears
orth along the Hudson. Maybe one
ay it will be found.

**AY EIGHTY-NINE**

It is time to leave. But it is difficult to leave for two reasons. One of the reasons is emotional: We've grown accustomed to the place and the people in it. We created the room and the Fluxture, and it has become a remarkable thing to us, even a beautiful thing. We're fond of the Queens Museum of Art. The second reason is practical: We have a room filled with stuff part of the purpose of which is to hide giant holes in the walls. And so we begin a rather tender process of trying to repair them. I find Jean lying on his back in the Kissing Booth, listening to a Kenny Rogers song on the 45 player, looking weepy. We decide to leave the minibar, the red velvet drapery, the pillows Stefany stuffed with parts of the Fluxture, and some other clandestine bits, to future visitors. The 45 player and the giant deer head were to go back to our space in Queens with the rest of the Fluxture, and live out their days as a permanent installation in the Flux executive bathroom. I grab a can of Spackle and half a sheet of drywall from the back and bring them into the room. Jean and Stefany are moving things around and positioning themselves in the room so that I can huddle in various areas and do my patchwork. It is quick work and it is sloppy work. Really, it is a disaster. It looks like the work of a small child. When we finally pull some of the things from the room and take a glance around, it is clear that we will have no way to explain it. Richie walks into the room a few minutes after I've finished and looks at me quizzically. We just stare at each other for a few seconds, and then he says, "What the hell happened in here?" I look at him for a few more seconds without responding. "We had to . . . anchor some things in the walls . . . and then rip them out . . . and we wanted to help you out by fixing things up again," I say. It is an absurd explanation for the mangled walls. Richie looks at me again with pity; it is a terrible explanation, though he can provide no better one. But perhaps the best of several possibilities has occurred. He has decided that we are simply idiots. The cost of being viewed as morons confers one important benefit: the secrets will be preserved for a little while at least.

We walk out of the museum for the last time with armfuls of junk slowly carried in over the past months and emerge into the cool fall of Corona Park. We have entombed the Kissing Booth, sealed it up until some future date when they reconfigure the walls inside the museum and unearth our secret oasis. There are riches in their walls and ceilings and forgotten places. The whole museum had become our sepulchre, but one in which every visitor had the potential for becoming an archaeologist, discovering a whole world beyond what was expected in a visit to the Panorama, revealed in tiny bits of debris and dated beans, pictures and notes. All one had to do was get a little off the beaten path. The anonymity of treasure is always personalized by the finder, and this would be how we continued to communicate with visitors long after our exeunt—to tell them a little about ourselves, about becoming a part of the museum, about our Fluxture. We have left behind all of our time capsules and alterations to their own fates and to the ways that they happen to reenter the history of the Queens Museum of Art in the future. And so we're leaving it all to the past and to the future simultaneously, not exactly what we anticipated on that first day but something we won't soon forget. Neither, we imagine, will the Queens Museum of Art. ■

# THE BROAD ESTATES OF DEATH

*By Paula Fox*

At noon they began their descent from the Organ Mountains to the valley below. The road swung from side to side, now hidden by an escarp, then flung into sight as it followed the declining slope. After a sharp turn, Harry Tilson drove the car onto a fenced shoulder and turned off the ignition. Amelia, his wife, yawned and stretched. Harry removed his jacket and folded it across the back seat. Above and behind them, the mountains baked in the midday sun.

"What's in the valley?" she asked.

"Nothing."

She picked up the map lying on the seat between them.

"When will we be there?" she asked.

"An hour or less," he answered.

"Are you scared yet? To see him?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

He hadn't seen his father, Ben, in twenty-three years. Amelia dropped the map. "How can anyone fold these things?" she asked. The United States lay across her knees covered with the penciled record of their journey from New York City to New Mexico.

"What a long way," she murmured.

Harry stared through the open window at the pale and heat-drained land below. The visit to his father, old and sick, probably dying, had been planned as a side trip during their vacation in Taos. All morning the mountains had obscured their destination.

Until Harry glimpsed the valley, he had not expected to feel much of anything. But now, along with mounting unease, the past began to own him. It was incomprehensible, all of it. Yet he had constructed from what he recalled of his early life a comic patter for himself and his listeners. It nearly convinced him he had a place to come from, early years, all that.

The stories he told were not so comic. He didn't know why he told them. Perhaps there was something satisfying in the responses he evoked when, in the guise of regional lore, he spoke of nomadic wanderings in search of work, skeletal Fords containing all that he and his father owned, whippings administered with baling wire after his mother died giving birth to his brother, who died a few months later of some childhood disease. Sometimes in mid-sentence, as he remembered the traveling fairs that passed seasonally through the valley towns, recalling in the wake of their gaudy, vacuous gaiety his hope that life would be different when he was older and smarter, Harry would fall silent. But he discovered that silence had its uses too.

Now, as he gazed down at it, he was astonished to perceive the valley actually existed, and he was confronted with an almost shameful truth that he was unable to find words for. The smell of wild sage assaulted his nostrils. He closed his eyes briefly and found was straining to catch the sound something stirring in the silence the mountains, just as he had when was a child. All of it had happened. turned on the ignition and grip the wheel.

"Did you always live around h when you were little?" Amelia ask

Harry put the car into second g the grade was steep. "Yes," he s then, "What? I'm sorry . . ."

"I asked—"

"I know what you asked." A tr gained on them, passed, and left hind a sound of grinding gears.

"Yes, what?" she asked.

"About living here? Yes. I said before. When he—"

"Your father?"

"We stayed near the river. Th where the work was."

Amelia made another try at refo ing the map. The ineffectual rustle the paper irritated him.

"I had a gift for finding the che est cars," he said.

"When you were little?" she ask

"I was ten. That's not little."

"Oh," she said. He sensed her d belief. Why did she bother to qu tion him? If he turned to look at h now he knew there would be a cert plaintive sweetness in her face.

"And then?" she asked.

"Then," he began, accelerating the road gradually leveled off, " packed the car and set off until

*Paula Fox is the author of* Borrowed Finery, *a memoir, and six novels. Her story "Grace" appeared in the June 2003 issue of* Harper's Magazine.

l work. He drank up the take. -days, he'd end up in a saloon a hustler and no money. I'd load both into the car, drive them herever we were camped. Some- the lady made me breakfast—"
–when you were ten?"
Then I was a few years older. They all over me," he said. His tone her feel vaguely implicated, and noved closer to the passenger door. doesn't look as if you could get hing to grow around here," she rved somewhat stiffly.
arry sighed and loosened his grip he wheel. They had reached the y floor. A few cattle stood here there staring at the daylight, as might have stared at darkness.
You always think you can," Harry "This is a bad month. But when irrigate—you could plant a tele- ne pole and it would take root." he offered him a cigarette, and as he it from her fingers he glanced at and smiled briefly. Their marriage



s recent, their experience of each ier still fresh. Everything in the car s about them, of them—their maps d cigarettes, the suitcases in which eir clothes were intermingled, a half- ipty bottle of whiskey that rolled ound the car floor.
He was recalling other cars, heaps of inging, rusty parts, his father's clothes d his bundled into blankets.
She was looking at him. He was such olitary being that she imagined him self-conceived—no parents, no past. r all his stories, she did not associate him with the complex accumulation of experience she sensed in other people.

"Look! There's a house," she said, startled, expecting only horizon and sky.

"We're almost there," he said. "Mrs. Coyle wrote the place was north of Las Cruces."

"How can people live like that?" she asked, turning her head to keep the house in view for a minute longer. It looked to her like a lump of yellow earth that had been scooped up roughly from the ground. What seemed like a doorway gave on to darkness. An inner tube rested against the dirt wall, and near it a chicken stood in a pose of expectancy. There was no other sign of life.

"It's a sod shack," he said. "You'd be surprised what you can live like."

Amelia, with their destination only minutes away, asked him a question that had bothered her since letters from Mrs. Coyle, the district nurse, and a Doctor Treviot, had arrived, telling Harry of Ben Tilson's stroke. "Will your father be crippled?" Her voice held a tremor that belied her air of detachment.

"It'll be all right," Harry said. "It's not catching. Only his right arm was affected." He had casually put his arm around her shoulder as he spoke. But he felt a sudden pain in his gut and withdrew the arm abruptly.

"What's the matter?"

"It's just that I'm getting tired of driving," he replied. He wondered why he had bothered to try and reassure her. His father could have no meaning for her, and for him Ben Tilson was a monthly check and a tax deduction. Ben was a wreck, the doctor had written. No one knew what held him together.

He knew, he thought, watching the road without seeing it, instead seeing his father, asleep in an irrigation ditch after eighteen hours of work, spring up as the water reached his bare feet, a nightmare figure blackened with mud. It was a contemptible life for a man. What was the use of such endurance? He despised the memory—that vision of Ben, a furious scarecrow, drunk with fatigue, digging the irrigation ditch still deeper to receive the flow of water.

"There it is," Harry said. They had rounded a curve, and just beyond it, oasislike, was a clump of cottonwood trees and, nailed to the trunk of one of them, a sign that read COYLE. Harry parked a few feet from the house. The siding and window frames were nearly bare of paint; the window shades were drawn, and a sheet-iron roof reflected the sunlight with brutal intensity.

For a brief moment, the two of them sat unmoving. Amelia sensed in Harry a vast exercise of will as he reached across her and opened the door, then got out on his side. As she stepped to the ground, she saw a gray stoop and several scrawny chickens roosting on its steps. A dog the color of charred wood gazed at her blankly before resting its head back on its paws. Harry waved his hand at the stoop, and the chickens flew lumpishly into the scrub grass. The dog rose and wagged its skinny tail just as Mrs. Verbena Coyle opened the screen door. She regarded them silently until a smile widened her lips to reveal small discolored teeth. Not a hair escaped from the thick braids wound round her head. Her pale eyes were unblinking. The heavy contours of her face were smooth; mass upon mass, moonlike and placid.

"I knew it was you as soon as I heard the car," she said. "Ben's been waiting all morning—wouldn't eat his lunch. Think you might make him eat it?"

Harry went up the steps quickly, and Amelia followed. Mrs. Coyle continued. "I tell him he's got to eat meat

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it he's going to get better"—she paused to extend a hand to Harry. "'I'll be on my feet soon, Verbena,' he says."

Mrs. Coyle advanced a step and held out her other hand to Amelia. "Is he any better?" Harry asked.

"He's not," Mrs. Coyle answered firmly. "There comes a time in an illness where it don't matter if you have a good day." She looked up at the sky and smacked her lips. "He's a sick man, Mr. Tilson." She released both their hands and folded her own across her stomach. "When I found him laying out in the shack, holding on to his old flatiron—he'd dug a hole right in the dirt floor with it, you know—I thought he was gone for sure. But the doctor did a lot for him. He even gets around a bit, but he's weak. That real weakness," the last words said emphatically. She nodded to Amelia. "I'm a trained nurse, you know, the only one for miles around."

"Could we see him now?" Harry asked.

"That's what you come for, isn't it?" Mrs. Coyle said. "You go round the house and I'll meet you in the back. Ben's in a little shed my husband fixed up." She entered the house.

Harry backed down the two steps and stood irresolutely, frowning down at his shoes.

"Isn't she something!" Amelia spoke in a low voice.

"Did you leave the cigarettes in the car?"

"I've got them right here," she replied quickly, holding the pack out to him. But he turned from her and set off for the back of the house. Only natural, she said to herself, inevitable.

A few cottonwood trees stood between them and the dusty lonesome-looking two-lane road. The heat sang in the silence. The air had the texture of warmed glue.

Mrs. Coyle met them at the back door. She was accompanied by a little pale man who, as she walked, slipped in and out of sight behind her as though he were in league with her shadow.

"In there," she said and waved toward an oversize chicken coop. At her words the small man took a giant step and Mrs. Coyle looked at him with rapt amusement, then turned to them, smiling archly. "This is my husband, Gulliver Coyle," she said. Mr. Coyle grinned eerily at them and nod Amelia noticed how knobby his fin were, and she recalled the dry fla furrows they had driven past.

"Come on," Harry urged her though she'd held back. She felt sting of resentment. How ridicul he looked in his finely tailored ja et, his costly slacks, as he stooc front of the shed. The dog had sl around the house to make a par their group.

Mrs. Coyle, as though seized impulse, strode up to the shed c and opened it. "They're here, B Your boy's here with his wife," cried as she stood aside to let H and Amelia precede her. Am stood back to wait for Mr. Co but he shook his head no, mov his abused hands in clumsy amial ty. Amelia stepped across threshold. The room containe bed, a rocking chair, and a tall dr er from which two middle drav were missing. The rungs of the headrest were patched with wl paint. An old man lay on the e of the bed. He lifted his left han greeting as Amelia walked tow him. But he was looking past he Harry. His eyes were large, fa blue, and veined. The control parent in the way he held his lo lipped mouth so stiffly gave wa the faintest of smiles. He ba parted his lips to speak.

"Well . . . it's been a long time, said in a thin, grainy voice. H held out a hand, which the old touched with his fingers. "I see hair's thinning," Ben Tilson said. looked at Amelia then. "I lost n young, too. Seems to run in the fa ly." There was a moment of sile which ended when Mrs. Coyle with arch severity, "Will you eat lunch now, Ben? I'll bring it in."

didn't look at her or swer, and she left the sl

Harry sat in the rocking ch Amelia knew he was under a str but still, there was no other plac sit, and she stood awkwardly in middle of the small room until pointed down at his bed with a s blance of the authority of a man knows how to deal with women the space he made for her by mo

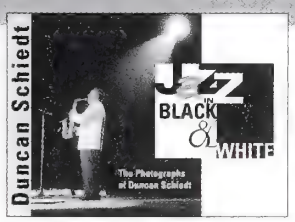
v inches very slowly, she sat
ı on sheets thin and gray from
of washing.
'on't worry," Ben said. "I can move
ı crowd me." She looked from fa-
o son; a resemblance echoed back
orth between them.
verything going good for you?"
asked.
airly well," Harry answered.
dn't he give his father the satis-
on of knowing how far he had
led away from this awful place?
y had a fundamental frugality, she
ght, a reluctance to admit obli-
n to anyone or anything.
Remember your Aunt Thyra?" Ben
d.
ure . . . of course," Harry said.
Well, she got into trouble up in
ıquerque," Ben went on. "She kept
orrowing money, signing papers
couldn't understand."
What did she want money for?"
d Harry irritably. "I thought you
e last year that Winslow was do-
pretty well?"
Women get queer around a cer-
age, I guess. She decided she'd
sed out on the grander things,
ght herself one of them hairless
xican dogs, took up smoking,
ght a truckload of clothes and fif-
ı silk ties for Winslow. Not to
e out expensive liquor."
Harry began to laugh. Broken,
lant, it sounded like weeping.
bent over and covered his face
h his hands. When he took them
y a moment later, only a faint
le remained.
They all heard Mrs. Coyle nearing
shed as she crooned to the
ckens. She entered the room car-
ng a small tray on which a plate
wded a jelly glass of milk. "Here
ı are, Ben. Show your boy how
ı can eat!"
She put the tray on the dresser,
lked between Harry and Amelia,
d began to plump up the thin pil-
vs behind Ben's head, arranging
s shoulders against them with
monstrative efficiency. Ben's eyes
re half-shut, but his left hand
oved convulsively. His right arm
s immobile on the cotton cover-
. Once the tray was on his lap, he
red up at Mrs. Coyle. With feroci-
, as though the sentiment had



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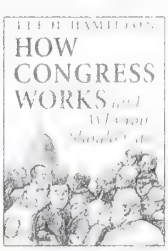



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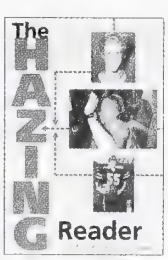
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been [illegible] he said. "I don't [illegible]

Mrs. Coyle [illegible] nodded. [illegible]ily. "Well—then I'll attend to my other charges," she said, crossing to a door on the other side of the room Amelia hadn't noticed. It led to [illegible]om, into which Mrs. Coyle disappeared.

Harry asked Amelia for matches. As she began searching her bag, Mrs. Coyle reappeared, her plump hands each placed on the heads of two children who clung to her skirt.

Framed by folds of cotton were the pale protuberant foreheads and silken-skinned faces of two little girls, thick pleats of skin around their slanted eyes.

"Alice and Pearly are going to have a little walk, then their lunch, then their naps," Mrs. Coyle said in a singsong voice.

"Get this tray off'n me," Ben demanded. Harry carried the tray to the dresser as Mrs. Coyle left with the children.

"Amelia . . . you've forgotten to give me the matches," Harry said Amelia held out a book of them as Ben's voice trembled in the close air of the room. "Verbena takes care of lots of folks around here," he said.

"I thought I'd drop in on Dr. Treviot, Dad," Harry said.

"He can't tell you nothing I don't know," Ben said. "When you're old and sick, doctors get this secret organization all rigged up. It's all about you, but you can't join it."

"No secrets," Harry said briskly. "I'll stick to the facts."

"The facts!" exclaimed Ben scornfully, just as Mrs. Coyle knocked on the door and stuck her head into the room. "Mr. Coyle is playing with the children," she announced. "Perhaps you'd come over to the kitchen, Mr. Tilson, now that I've got some time."

Amelia smiled at Ben, who didn't smile back, and followed Harry and Mrs. Coyle into the yard. Mr. Coyle was just rounding the house holding the hands of the girls. They moved torpidly beside him, their faded smocks flattened against their legs. Amelia turned from them into Mrs. Coyle's huge smile. "Perhaps you'd keep old Ben company while your husband and I talk business," she said.

Amelia cast a pleading glance at Harry; he ignored her.

She went back to the shed. The old man looked at her without much interest as she resumed her seat on the bed. "Well . . . ," he sighed.

"I've never been to this part of the country before," Amelia said. Perplexed when Ben didn't answer her right away, she fell silent.

"Harry's mother died young," he said suddenly.

"Yes. He told me."

"You were saying?"

"I've never been out here," she repeated.

"Oh?" He spoke with faint interest. Could he be falling asleep or was it that she'd lost his attention? It was as if she'd never appeared in the room. Then his voice came out of the absence in his face. His lips parted and revealed a few brown teeth.

"... like his mother," Ben said, continuing an inner story. He went on.

"When he was little, he had fat little legs, short like this—" He placed his index finger in the dead hollow of his right arm. "No longer than my forearm. I used to run him down paths, and those fat little legs of his . . . My! He could run!" They looked at each other for a long moment. Amelia thought, it's not going to be so hard. But she felt some betrayal of Harry. Had he ever thought his father knew him in such a way?

"He always did have friends," the old man went on. "Wherever we went and stopped a bit." He looked warily at Amelia. "Maybe you didn't know that?"

"No, I didn't," she said.

"I'll be getting dressed now," he said gruffly. With his good left arm, he lifted his right onto his lap.

"Shall I go get Mrs. Coyle to help you?"

"I'll manage," he said.

She left the shed. The chickens were gathered around a pile of potato peelings. Amelia avoided them, repulsed by their scrawniness.

Harry was sitting at the kitchen table with the Coyles. Mr. Coyle was staring at his wife with doggy admiration. No one looked up as Amelia came into the kitchen.

"Your father is getting dressed," she said sharply.

Mrs. Coyle nodded. "Sure he is [illegible] expects you to take him around [illegible] valley to visit old friends. He doe[illegible] hardly get anywhere these days."

Harry got to his feet. "Is there a[illegible] thing else?" he asked.

"I've tried to tell you all of it," [illegible] Coyle replied. "There'll be no p[illegible] in your seeing the doctor."

"I'd like to use your bathroom," [illegible] ry said with a touch of plaintiven[illegible]

"Mr. Coyle will show you the [illegible] cilities," Mrs. Coyle said. Her [illegible] band rose obediently, and Harry [illegible] lowed him out of the kitchen. [illegible] clump of their footsteps sounded [illegible] loud, as though the house were [illegible] low. Mrs. Coyle made no effor[illegible] detain Amelia, and after a min[illegible] she walked out of the kitchen. H[illegible] wearing khaki pants and a faded [illegible] work shirt, leaned against the s[illegible] door. She ran to him, but he wa[illegible] her away.

"Where's the car?" he wanted [illegible] know.

Slowly, they made their way to [illegible] front of the house. He wouldn't let [illegible] take his good arm. Once they were [illegible] side the car, he seemed to ignore [illegible] After several minutes, he reach[illegible] across her and pressed the horn.

"He'll be along soon," she said [illegible]

"What's he doing in there?" [illegible] asked irritably. Harry emerged fr[illegible] the house to the sagging porch, wip[illegible] his mouth fastidiously with a ha[illegible] kerchief. Ben moved one foot b[illegible] and forth, and Amelia felt on [illegible] cheek a drop of sweat like a tear.

"Where to?" Harry said as he [illegible] into the car.

"Toward town," Ben sa[illegible]

Here and there houses l[illegible] shacks rose into the yellow light [illegible] the still afternoon. Once, Ame[illegible] saw a truck without wheels, ab[illegible] doned in a field. A dog ran by [illegible] side of the road, its pink tong[illegible] hanging out. They went pas[illegible] porch upon which an old person [illegible] in a rocking chair, unmovi[illegible] mouth open to the heat. As th[illegible] drove by a store, Ben poked Am[illegible] with unexpected familiarity. "Y[illegible] can buy a pork chop or a hoe in [illegible] store . . ." Next to it stood a gas s[illegible] tion with a large tin bucket in fr[illegible] of a solitary gas tank.

top here," Ben directed. Harry
d off the road in front of what
lia guessed was a boarding
e. After the motor died, the two
got out of the car without a
ward glance. Amelia scrambled
nd followed them as they ap-
ched the steps leading up to a
ow swayed porch. In the shade
overhang stood a cluster of old
. Their work clothes were shape-
with use and age. It crossed
elia's mind that if touched,
'd turn to dust.

en neared the steps cautiously,
ead down. Harry walked beside
. Amelia sensed a struggle be-
n them as Ben edged away from
son, holding the dead arm with
other. As he placed his foot on
first of three steps, the old men
n to shout his name again and
n. One did a short buck-and-
g. Amelia imagined she heard
click-clack of ghostly bones.

When Ben reached the porch, he
ed back triumphantly at Harry.
k what I've done, his look
ned to say; I'm somebody here in
own country.

He introduced her: "Amelia, my
ghter-in-law," his voice loud.
elia smiled, and it seemed to suf-
, because the old men, Ben along
h them, drifted to the other end
he porch. Amelia looked around
Harry and found him a few steps
ind her. He pointed at Ben,
ok his head, and sighed exagger-
dly. They listened to the loud guf-
s, the moments of silence broken
rply by the rise of someone's
cked old voice, a faint mumble.

"I'll wait in the car," Amelia said.
e was nearly asleep when Harry
d Ben rejoined her.

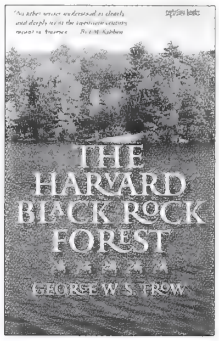
That afternoon they paid another
it. All the way to the Sherman
ch, Ben was loquacious. He told
ries about his friends, the ones
ey had just seen on the boarding-
use porch. Their stories all bore
e same stamp of misfortune—long
oughts, disastrous storms, grudging
rvests. They had outlived it all,
n said, they had the last laugh.

No one has the last laugh, Amelia
ought.

They parked in a driveway of sorts
d entered a darkened room that



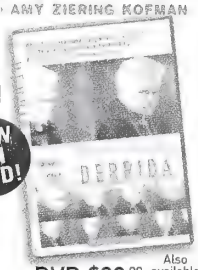

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SOLUTION TO THE MARCH PUZZLE

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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NOTES FOR "CHUTES AND LADDERS":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

*The winner is Jane*

DICK'S CHAIN:
A. a-Sp.; B. per-t; C. t(ende)r-umps; D. (neces)sari(ly); E. 1-rat-E; F. emirates*; G. shaver (2 mngs.); H. rag-as; I. straiten*; J. needler (2 mngs.); K. real-m(afia); L. misers*; M. senatorial*; N. Lee (2 mngs.); O. el-I.(cite)D.; P. dating (2 mngs.); Q. gall-Eries; R. s(inger)-ash; S. (C)heck; T. karm*-a; U. aimless*; V. s-op.; W. (tro)pica(l).

JANE'S CHAIN: a. as-pirate-D(epp); b. deli(ghts); c. I-C-I-CL-E.; d. Erasmus*; e. serf (surf); f. F.(unicular*)S. (rev.); g. strum(pet); h. M(aelstro*)M; i. maim (Mame); j. midterm*; k. mu's-e; l. E.-ntail*; m. leg-al.; n. lure*; o. epicarp*; p. prohi*-B.-it; q. toes (tows); r. shares*; s. squa(ri[nd])sh; t. (underneat)h-a-ve(ssel); u. E.-rector; v. rerecorded*; w. die (2 mngs.); x. essays (homophone).

held a stale coolness. A rancher's huge, callused hand swept a black tomcat from a chair.

"Get off there, cat," Mr. Sherman said. "You sit right down here, Ben. It's fine to see you. So your boy come home and brought his new wife? Well now, Mrs. Tilson, why don't you go visit with Mrs. Sherman?" He pointed toward the kitchen.

Mrs. Sherman, the middle-aged woman in a housedress who had greeted them at the front door, was making coffee. She wiped her hands on her dress and pulled out a chair at a round table for Amelia.

"You must find it different here from back East."

"Yes, it is." From the other room, she could hear the men's voices rising and falling. What could wake her up fully? Her eyes nearly closed, she looked up to see Mrs. Sherman pouring coffee into thick white mugs. She was speaking about children.

"No. We don't have any," Amelia replied listlessly to the question.

"Whatever would that be like?" exclaimed Mrs. Sherman. "My children are all grown up and they've moved away. I don't know why I bother with that cat. It spends its nights getting into fights and coming home limping with its ears unstitched. I suppose you got to have something around that's alive and don't fight with you."

"Those two children Mrs. Coyle takes care of—" Amelia began impulsively.

"Pearly's my niece's little girl. Alice comes from somewhere down the valley. Bless Verbena. It isn't everybody who would bother."

"But there are special places for children like that," Amelia insisted, remotely outraged that anyone would bless Mrs. Coyle.

"I suppose so," replied Mrs. Sherman. She put the mugs of coffee on a tray and started off to the parlor. Amelia followed, carrying a sugar bowl and a pitcher of milk. Mrs. Sherman served Ben first, placing the mug on a stool where he could reach it.

"I'm not supposed to drink coffee," Ben said. "But I will, thank you. If Verbena was here she'd knock it out of my hand." He drank the coffee slowly, only his eyes closing to show his pleasure. Amelia sat down beside Harry. He seemed unaware of her. No one spoke or moved until Ben put his emptied mug down.

"You've got to take care of yourself, Ben," Mrs. Sherman said in a kindly voice.

"Yeah . . . ," the old man sighed, opening his eyes, his mouth slack. Mr. Sherman, who had been watching him, turned his attention to Harry.

"You going back East soon?" he asked.

"This afternoon," replied Harry, shooting a warning glance at Amelia.

"It's a short visit," Mrs. Sherman remarked. Nothing more was said. And what if they were leaving? Amelia asked herself. What could be solved if they stayed longer? People went off and returned, again and again until they died. Generations of tomcats left and came back, staying home until their wounds healed. The heat was immutable.

Harry stood up and handed his mug to Mrs. Sherman. "Dad," he said. Ben looked blankly about the room. "We're going?" he asked. He too got to his feet, but this time he took Harry's arm.

"It's been grand to see you," Mrs. Sherman said. Ben nodded as though he didn't know the Shermans.

"Come again, soon," Mr. Sherman said.

Outside, the intensity of the light had diminished. As they drove back to the Coyles' house, Amelia saw far ahead the Organ Mountains, shadowed, mysterious in the twilight.

Mrs. Coyle was waiting for them on the porch. "I'm glad you brought my boy home safe," she called out amiably. Ben grunted, but whether it was from disgust or the effort of moving, Amelia couldn't guess. They walked with him to the shed, Mrs. Coyle following like fate. The sky grew plum-colored.

As soon as they went inside, Ben lay down on his bed. Mrs. Coyle covered him with a blanket and left.

"We'll be on our way," Harry said.

Ben stared up at them, his eyes empty.

"I'll keep in touch," Harry promised.

"Goodbye," Amelia said and held out her hand. He touched it with one finger. At the door, Amelia turned back. Ben hadn't moved. There was such desolation in the whole look of him, though there was no expression on his face she could name.

While Harry spoke to Mrs. Coyle, Amelia went to the car. It's over, she realized.

Harry reached into the car for his jacket, still folded across the back seat, and got in. He felt in his pockets for cigarettes and turned on the ignition at the same time. Mrs. Coyle lifted a fat white arm, the broad hand dipped, and she turned slowly and entered her house. Just as the Tilsons drove onto the road, Amelia looked back once more and saw Mr. Coyle with something between a leap and a run suddenly appear on the driveway. He too waved, then stood still, staring after them.

They drove for a while in silence.

## April Index Sources

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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## HE OLIGARCHS' ALL

***shington's oilman-plutocrats rt their Russian counterparts***

George W. Bush rode into Washington on a pledge that, in the uncharted realm of ign policy, he would set higher ndards of conduct than did the vious regime. On Russia in par- ılar, candidate Bush did not nce words. He decried the war Chechnya as the brutal blood- ing it was (and still is). He eatened to punish Russia by hholding loans from the Inter- ional Monetary Fund; in a de- e with Al Gore he even claimed t IMF funds had "ended up in ctor Chernomyrdin's pockets." hernomyrdin, Yeltsin's stalwart me minister, had been Gore's tner in a joint commission that, he absence of Cold War summit- was the centerpiece of U.S.-Russ- relations during the Clinton years.) d on the subject of the oligarchs, clutch of Russian "entrepreneurs" o had seized the spoils of the Sovi- state and become preposterously h almost overnight, the governor m Texas railed against their con- ɔution to Russia's twin epidemics crime and corruption. "The real ıdamental question for Russia," he d Jim Lehrer in February 2000, "is at will Russia look like—will she be ıarket economy, or will she be one these economies where a favored elite are able to put money in their n pockets? And it's something that need to be concerned about, we ed to watch very carefully."

For a short time, Bush and company appeared to stay vigilant. In early 2001, when the richest of the oligarchs, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the then thirty-seven-year-old CEO of the oil giant Yukos, sought a meeting with National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, she declined the mogul's request. Khodorkovsky, it seems, did not pass




the requisite intelligence vetting: although Russia's richest man has not been successfully prosecuted to date, he and his corporate associates have been shadowed for years by allegations of everything from tax evasion and embezzlement to murder. A former Communist Youth leader, Khodorkovsky in 1995 acquired the controlling stake in Yukos for just $309 million, in an auction run by his own bank. By October 2003, when he was arrested and jailed in a Kremlin-led investigation into Yukos, his personal assets exceeded $8 billion.

The cautious approach in the Bush Administration's dealings with the oligarchs seems not to have lasted long. After the September 11 attacks, as non-Arab oil gained an urgent allure, the distance grew between declaration and deed. In a series of private meetings—many of which have hitherto gone unnoticed in the press—the administration, its corporate proxies, and even the President's own father have quietly been waging a campaign to charm the oligarchs, the same "favored few elite" whom candidate Bush had discerned to be the clear and present danger in the Russian morass.

Much of the contact with the oligarchs—in particular, Khodorkovsky—has taken place under the auspices of The Carlyle Group, the Washington-based private equity fund that, with more than $17.5 billion under management and investments in thirteen countries across three continents, is among the world's largest. Carlyle's ties to both Bush administrations are many and well known. James A. Baker III, secretary of state under Bush *père* and today the younger Bush's special envoy on Iraqi debt, serves Carlyle as its "Senior Counselor," having joined the group in 1993. George H.W. Bush himself held the position of "Senior Adviser" at the firm from 1999 until 2003; other Carlyle officials include his former budget director, Dick Darman, as well as Frank Carlucci, who served as secretary of defense during his vice presidency.

In November 2001, two months after the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, Khodorkovsky was invited to a lavish Carlyle dinner in London, where he chatted with the former president Bush. Three months later, in February 2002, the oligarch dined again with Bush, this time in a more intimate setting: a private lunch at a

itrations by Christopher Serra

Houston country club, a small gathering to introduce the Russian oilman to the former president's friends in the local oil community. That April, Khodorkovsky's [illegible] intention to invest $50 million in The Carlyle Group[illegible] pointed to the fund's energy [illegible]. In June 2003 came the real coup, a dinner at a private home in Beaver Creek, Colorado, the "top-dollar, ultra-plush luxury resort" (as a local paper calls it) just up the valley from Vail. This time, the gathering of a dozen or so included a man with a singular interest in the future of Russia and the petrochemicals industry: Vice President Dick Cheney. This perhaps was the last straw for Putin, whose own campaign pledge to liberate the motherland from the oligarchs' grip has since devolved into favoritism and selective prosecution. By June, Putin already had clashed with Khodorkovsky over the latter's political independence; four months later, Khodorkovsky was seized on a Siberian airstrip, thrown into a Moscow cell, and charged with various long-alleged white-collar crimes.

In Washington, many who note the current President's warm bond with the man in the Kremlin wonder why Carlyle would have taken the political risk of courting the oligarchs. In Moscow, however, they understand. After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, according to a number of published reports, Carlyle lost Arab investors, who either withdrew their money or saw it returned when it had become impolitic to manage. Among these investors was Shafig bin Laden, one of Osama's numerous brothers. On September 11, 2001, Shafig was at the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Washington, attending a Carlyle conference. Carlyle returned Bin Laden's investment, reportedly a paltry $2 million. But many believe that millions more have been returned or withdrawn. "They need the oligarchs' money more than ever," says a Moscow financier who has long had dealings with Carlyle. "They're replacing the Bin Ladens with the Potanins and the Khodorkovskys."

"Potanins" refers to the Kremlin's new favorite oligarch, Vladimir Potanin, the forty-two-year-old banker who controls the Norilsk Nickel metals empire. Last June, in an instructive example of the oligarchs' new clout in Washington, Norilsk was able quietly to acquire the Stillwater Mining Company of Montana, the United States' only producer of palladium—among the most sought-after of the "platinum group metals," known collectively in the metals trade as PGM. Only a few corners of the planet produce palladium, platinum's lesser-known relative; the metal has a number of uses, but since the 1970s it has been most prized as a vital component of catalytic converters. The supply of palladium has fluctuated wildly in recent years, as has its price on the London exchange, topping $1,000 an ounce in January 2001. Stillwater controls a twenty-eight-mile reef that boasts "the highest grade PGM ore body in the world" and has a clutch of long-term contracts with the automobile makers GM, Ford, and Mitsubishi.

To ensure the historic union, Norilsk hired Baker Botts LLP, the Houston-based law firm whose senior partner is James A. Baker III. Baker performed his task well, and quickly. The initial contact had not come until January 2002, when Stillwater's CEO met a Potanin envoy at an industry forum in Florida. By September all parties convened in New York to talk terms, and on November 20, 2002, Norilsk announced its intention to buy Stillwater for $341 million: $100 million in cash and the balance in palladium, some 876,270 ounces. The following March, when Norilsk submitted five nominees for Stillwater's new nine-member board, atop the list was Craig L. Fuller, now the CEO of the National Association of Chain Drug Stores but formerly the chief of staff for Vice President George H.W. Bush, the co-chair of his presidential transition team, and chair of the 1992 Republican National Convention.

Russians have bought other American assets in recent years: for example, Getty Oil and Rouge Steel are n[illegible] both oligarch-owned. The Stillwa[illegible] deal, however, was unprecedented[illegible] its scope and significance, and as su[illegible] it required muscular lobbying on bo[illegible] sides of the Atlantic. The Russia[illegible] needed export approval from the Ce[illegible] tral Bank, while the Americans h[illegible] to calm the antitrust concerns of t[illegible] Federal Trade Commission and sa[illegible] fy the Committee on Foreign Inve[illegible] ment in the United States (CFIU[illegible] CFIUS, an interagency body led[illegible] the Treasury Department, governs [illegible] Exon-Florio Amendment, the Defe[illegible] Production Act provision that requ[illegible] governmental review of foreign tra[illegible] actions that may have a bearing[illegible] U.S. national security.

Fortunately for Potanin, the tra[illegible] action had help at the highest lev[illegible] On June 1, 2003, President Bush fl[illegible] to St. Petersburg to help his frie[illegible] Vladimir Putin celebrate his hor[illegible] town's 300th birthday. Although [illegible] on the public agenda, the Stillw[illegible] transaction was inserted into the P[illegible] ident's briefing book. In a tête-à-têt[illegible] the lavishly restored Konstan[illegible] Palace, the two presidents discus[illegible] the deal. Days later, Potanin wen[illegible] the Kremlin to apprise Putin of [illegible] terms. On June 18, Sergei Mirono[illegible] loyal Putin mouthpiece who heads [illegible] upper house of Russia's parliame[illegible] announced the government's supp[illegible]

In the United States, too, the fed[illegible] bodies complied. The deal clea[illegible] Exon-Florio on January 17, 2003. [illegible] the surprise of many in the PGM [illegible] dustry, who noted that together [illegible] rilsk and Stillwater control more th[illegible] 50 percent of the palladium mar[illegible] the FTC granted early terminatio[illegible] the waiting period for the transacti[illegible] That same day in Denver, Stillw[illegible] shareholders voted their approval, [illegible] on June 23 the deal was done. By th[illegible] however, palladium had declined [illegible] nearly six-year low, and so the [illegible] ing price had dropped to $257 m[illegible] lion—nearly $100 million less t[illegible] the sale price announced just se[illegible] months earlier. Industry analysts, w[illegible] ing that the bulk of the price for S[illegible] water came in metal, wonder if [illegible] rilsk had "destocked"—i.e., dum[illegible]

al—only to sit back, watch the e crash, and wait to buy Stillwater. he eight months since the deal ed, the price of palladium has risen ercent, to $242 per ounce. Montanans, meanwhile, never did m to the deal, nor did many indus- analysts. Tim Wood, a columnist for news site Mineweb, marveled that t ten years after the Cold War ef- ively ended, the once mortal ene- now stands to control half of the ld's supply of palladium with its right in America's heartland."

The battle between Putin and Khodorkovsky has left the Bush Administration ex- ed. Since the oilman's imprison- nt—and that of his partner, Pla- Lebedev, himself a former lyle adviser—the President, the e President, and Condoleezza e have kept mute. But their en- s from the neoconservative brain t mounted a defense of Russia's est man that, in the unseemli- s of its lacquered hyperbole, was d to say the least. First came hard Perle, resident fellow of the erican Enterprise Institute EI), which had hosted the Beaver ek forum, who told anyone who uld listen that Khodorkovsky's est had revealed Putin's true, ty nature. Perle was among the t to call for ousting Russia from G8 and for barring Russian com- ies from their prewar Iraqi oil ls. After Lebedev's arrest, in a at the Carnegie Moscow Cen- Perle thundered that "it's possi- already to say that real damage is ng done to the prospects for fu- e Russian economic growth and elopment by what appears to be arbitrary, capricious, and vindic- e campaign against a private npany." Perle did not add that Carnegie Moscow Center is a llite of the Carnegie Endowment International Peace, in Wash- ton, which has received a grant m Yukos—$500,000 of a poten- three-year grant of $1.5 million. n the op-ed pages of the *Washing- Post*, Bruce Jackson—a protégé of Cheney, Perle, and Paul Wolfowitz, and most recently a VP at Lockheed Martin—put Putin in the company of Hitler, declaring that "in dollar terms, we are witnessing the largest illegal expropriation of Jewish property in Europe since the Nazi seizures during the 1930s." (The *Post* identified Jackson merely as the "president of the Project on Transitional Democracies.") Next up, in the *New York Times*, Perle's colleague Leon Aron, fellow AEI scholar and noted Yeltsin biographer, cast Khodorkovsky as an ardent philanthropist, calling him "the scapegoat for the misdeeds of the 1990's." (Aron failed to mention—as did the *Times*—that AEI, too, had benefited from the philanthropy of the fallen oligarch; Yukos had also pledged $500,000 to AEI, of which AEI has to date received only the first tranche, $125,000.)

Putin, it seemed, had driven a wedge through the heart of the Bush foreign-policy establishment. What had happened? The answer, it would appear, is the thirst for non-Arab oil, which has prompted a fundamental shift in Russia policy since September 2001. In the National Security Council and the State Department, officials complain that the Vice President's office has made an end run around them on Russia, and that on all the issues—Putin, the oligarchs, Chechnya—the policy has been entirely focused on petrochemicals. "Over the last couple of years, the appreciation has grown of the potential scale of Russia as the major alternative for oil resources, as an offset to the Middle East," notes the Pulitzer Prize–winning oil historian and industry consultant Daniel Yergin, who himself served on Carlyle's energy board alongside Baker and Khodorkovsky until resigning last year. "After 1998 a lot of people gave up on Russia, but the last couple of years have shown dramatic growth, what some in the industry call 'the Russian oil miracle.' There are not a lot of places to go.... Russia now looms much larger."

The myopia of such a foreign policy notwithstanding, the oligarchs have quickly learned how to thrive within it. Their flexibility comes naturally: trade and commerce in Russia, since the days of the Romanovs, have followed the patrimonial model, in which courtiers who wish to succeed must "kiss the ring," as the Russians like to say. Moscow bankers and brokers are already inured to the spectacle of oligarchs beseeching the Kremlin to bless their acquisitive instincts. For them the success of the oligarchs abroad, far from symbolizing Russia's post–Cold War transition to a market economy, merely delivers a bitter and familiar lesson: that as inseparable as business and politics have always been in Russia, these days, at least, matters in America are not so very different.

*—Andrew Meier*

## EXECUTIVE PRIVILEGE

***Inside corporate America's homeland security hot line***

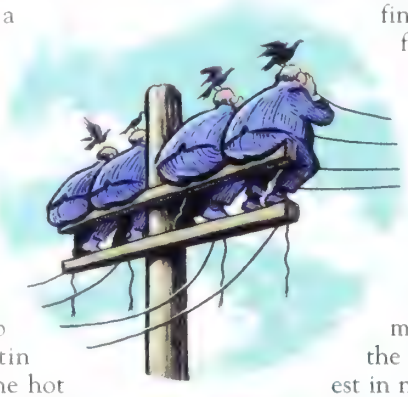
Last April 8 and 9, more than seventy people, including policymakers from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the White House, the Treasury Department, and the FBI, gathered in a conference room in Washington, D.C., to consider a harrowing scenario. In it, scores of feverish people flood into Chicago-area hospitals, coughing up blood. Doctors recognize the symptoms to be those of pneumonic plague, a highly contagious disease that causes respiratory failure within seventy-two hours unless immediately treated with powerful antibiotics. Short on supplies, the city contacts DHS in Washington. But there, officials are already scrambling to contain another disaster: an inexplicable failure in the accounting systems of two of New York's largest banks. Both attacks, the scenario continues, are the work of terrorists who have unleashed a simultaneous, two-city attack.

The exercise was designed to hone the decision-making capabilities not of public-health officials or of police commissioners but of high-level cor-

porate executives, who were the majority of the attendees. DHS has refused to disclose which executives or companies participated in the exercise, or where it was held; the Business Roundtable, the association that organized the event, will say only that it included CEOs and executives from the health-care, pharmaceutical, telecommunications, financial, consumer-products, and manufacturing industries. All present had come together to test the capabilities of CEO COM LINK, a secure, exclusive telephone system established in November 2001 that allows chief executives to speak directly with Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and other officials during a terrorist attack.

CEO COM LINK—"CEO" ostensibly stands for Critical Emergency Operations—is a remarkable example of what the Business Roundtable likes to call a "private-public partnership." The exclusive communications network was created by the Roundtable for use by its members, 150 CEOs from Fortune 500 companies such as American International Group, Bechtel, Citigroup, Dow Chemical, ExxonMobil, GE, Ford, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon. (The Roundtable's chairman, Henry A. McKinnell, is the CEO of Pfizer Inc. and recently was named a Bush Pioneer after having raised more than $100,000 for President George W. Bush's 2004 reelection campaign.) But at least some of the impetus for the network seems to have come from Secretary Ridge himself, whose office indicated that CEO COM LINK has already been activated four times, all at Ridge's request. The Roundtable would not confirm that number or discuss specific dates of calls, citing "security protocols." But C. Michael Armstrong—the chairman of the Roundtable's Security Task Force and the former CEO of AT&T, which is providing the lines for the system free of charge—recently told a federal commission on cyber-terrorism that CEO COM LINK (or "CEO COM LINK℠," as his presentation had it, the Roundtable having trademarked the name) has been utilized on "several" occasions "when the terror threat level changed." Al Martinez-Fonts, Ridge's special assistant for the private sector, says that each call has lasted from ten to thirty minutes, and that all "have been purely informational."

Even in an administration notorious for its catering to corporate interests, CEO COM LINK affords the Business Roundtable an astonishing status. No other organization, public or private, has such a secure and open line to the top tier of government during a national disaster. Since the 1990s, companies in certain industries have been able to correspond with the government through "Information Sharing and Analysis Centers." But these are set up as email-only bulletin boards, not telephone hot lines, and their participants are typically not CEOs but top security officers. (Chief executives from companies in the chemical, water, and financial ISACs have now been invited to join CEO COM LINK, however.) In the public sector, of course, such a system is completely unheard of. "There's nothing like it," says Representative Curt Weldon (R., Pa.), who serves as vice chairman of a House committee on emergency preparedness and response. Weldon, a former firefighter, says his committee has been working with the DHS to integrate all emergency responders with an Internet-based system, but "it still doesn't exist yet." Communication with the local and state governments is so shoddy, he notes, that state governors, who bear responsibility for activating the National Guard, still lack the full access to classified information on terrorist threats that members of Congress have. "That's crazy," he says. Certain organizations, such as the Red Cross and the International Association of Fire Chiefs, say they take part in conference calls with Ridge and other top DHS officials when the terror alert is raised, but no dedicated hot line like CEO COM LINK exists for any other group: not governors, mayors, firefighters, hospitals, or police.



For the Roundtable, the privileged position that CEO COM LINK affords CEOs is a natural and necessary by-product of the privatization of U.S. infrastructure. As the Roundtable's website notes, with no small amount of approval: "More than 85 percent of the nation's critical infrastructure—the power grid, financial services, information services, railroads, airlines, and others—is controlled by the private sector." When I asked John Castellani, the Roundtable's president, whether CEOs' profit motive might conflict with the government's interest in national security, he shot back that the two were "absolutely tied together with the same purpose." He continued: "We saw the need for better communications between the people who own and operate the critical infrastructure and the government about how to be responsive to save lives and recover from an attack. Putting any other kind of diabolical connotation to it is just absolutely wrong."

But the fact remains that CEO COM LINK is the only system of its kind in America, and as such it could, during a national emergency, allow for a kind of ad hoc governance by the Roundtable and its unelected CEOs. If this seems farfetched, consider a line from Armstrong's executive summary about the April war game, in which he notes that, during the simulated bioterrorist attack on Chicago, the DHS "required input from the health-care industry to identify additional resources and to increase production of pharmaceuticals." This seems reasonable enough on its face; but if CEO COM LINK were the only communication line open, the opinions of pharma-

tical company CEOs about drug luction would be consulted while se of the nation's hospital and lth-care workers would not. In such enario, no one from outside of busi- could raise objections about a par- lar drug—as happened, for exam- in December, when a federal judge ered the Pentagon to stop giving nrax vaccinations to soldiers in Iraq nout their consent. Nor, in the nt of a blatant corporate handout, ld anyone protest—as happened n Republicans changed the Home- l Security Act of 2002 to expand li- ity protections for vaccine pro- ers. This would be especially risome in an emergency lasting, weeks or months, during which CEOs of Dow Chemical, Bechtel, onMobil, and Pfizer could wind up king closed-door decisions through- with the DHS secretary. As Mar- Hopkins, the Roundtable's direc- of public policy, told me, the ntual goal during a crisis will be to p CEO COM LINK "up and run- g during the entire period of time."

For all its capabilities, CEO COM LINK remains remark- ably unsung by its sponsors. e Business Roundtable has not ght press attention for the hot , and neither it nor the Round- le is mentioned on the Depart- nt of Homeland Security's web- . Perhaps for this reason, media erage of the system has largely n limited to niche publications government officials or tech- ogy experts; the two-day war ne last April, for example, went irely unreported.

Secretiveness on such matters seems suit the DHS, the first U.S. gov- ment agency in history that has a arate division dedicated to serving private sector. Last year the DHS posed new information guidelines t would provide corporations a ad immunity from federal and state for information about their infra- ucture vulnerabilities they volun- ly submit to the government, and ld exempt that data from the Free- n of Information Act. The Busi- ness Roundtable, not surprisingly, agrees: "To enable a free information flow to government, businesses require reasonable assurances that such communications do not harm their individual interests," the Roundtable said in a July 2003 report on regulation and terrorism. The report praised the FOIA exemption as a "positive step" and urged the government not to take a "command-and-control" approach to homeland security but instead to "favor deference to private initiative."

Will the conversations that take place over CEO COM LINK also be exempt from FOIA requests? I put the question to Martinez-Fonts at the DHS, but he wouldn't say. Without a definitive answer, the possibility remains that the public's interest in CEO COM LINK could be eclipsed by the "individual interests" of the corporations themselves.

*—Tim Shorrock*

## WELCOME TO THE MACHINE

***A citizens' guide to hacking the 2004 election***

That serious problems plague our new, computerized voting machines—on which 29 percent of U.S. voters are poised to cast their votes in November—has been apparent ever since $3.9 billion in federal funding for the machines was made available in 2002, in the aftermath of *Bush* v. *Gore*. In the years since, report after report has cautioned that the machines lack the security and robustness necessary to withstand the assaults of hackers or unscrupulous technicians. But no one seems likely to stop the rollout of the machines, more than 50,000 of which have been purchased by states. For those who hope to salvage the integrity of this year's election, then, energies must shift from the effort to stop vote-hacking—now a doomed task, it would appear—to an effort, instead, to ensure that access to vote-hacking will be as open and democratic as possible.

In that spirit, *Harper's Magazine* is pleased to offer the following primer. To be sure, you will not find it a simple task to steal the 2004 election—not compared with the Gilded Age, when one could cram ballot boxes with fraudulent votes in a ploy that Texans called the "Harrison County Methods." (Decrying such trickery in his memoir, one frustrated Texan politician wrote that "dead Negroes, mules and horses" had cast ballots for his opponent, as had Fido Jenkins, a dog who nevertheless had managed to vote five times.) But when voting-machine vendors dismiss the possibility of their machines being tampered with as "academic," they underestimate the intelligence, skill, and tenacity of the world's hackers—and even, perhaps, of ordinary readers such as yourself.

*Option 1: Take a job at a voting-machine company.*

The most destructive means of attack, albeit the most challenging, would be to seed the voting machines with a "Trojan horse," a malicious software program that would lie dormant and undetected until its services were required. Such a program could be triggered by the voting machine's internal clock to awaken only between the hours of 8:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. on the first Tuesday in November, at which time it could, for example, begin to subtract or disregard one vote out of every 100 for each candidate with a particular party affiliation. Note that for this option to succeed, you will need to stay in your boss's good graces: Hiding a Trojan horse in the machines will require administrative access to the machines' basic source code, which is ostensibly limited to trusted individuals within the company.

Having risen through the ranks at a voting-machine company, will you still be willing to risk your career for a candidate? Perhaps not. But should your partisanship flag, you can simply fall back on greed. Consider the good fortunes of Ron Harris, a mid-level computer technician for Nevada's Gaming Control Board, who embedded

Trojan horses in dozens of video-poker and slot machines in the early to mid-1990s. Harris's program allowed accomplices to trigger maximum jackpots by placing bets in particular sequences. In this fashion he netted nearly $50,000 without arousing the casinos' suspicion. (Be careful not to overstep: when Harris attempted to hack a one-time, $100,000 jackpot in a New Jersey Keno game, his entire scheme was discovered.) Imagine how much a Bush Pioneer or an Emily's Lister might pay to guarantee victory.



*Option 2: Take a job as an election worker.*

Another kind of attack is possible in the period after the polls have closed, when the storage media that contain the voting records are manually transported to a central office. Some of the machines, such as those manufactured by Ohio-based Diebold Election Systems, store votes on simple PCMCIA cards, a storage device familiar to users of digital cameras. After stealing one of the PCMCIA cards, you can pass it to a confederate who will decode and reencode it off-site.

Will it be possible to crack the code quickly enough? Probably so. Experts have long known DES, the encryption algorithm used to protect Diebold's cards, to be second-rate. More than five years ago, the Electronic Frontier Foundation decoded a DES-protected message in twenty-two hours, and today's computers no doubt can accomplish the task much more rapidly. An added boon: all Diebold cards are encrypted using the same, hard-coded key—a design mistake inveighed against in even the most rudimentary cryptography class. If you can determine the DES key of a single machine prior to an election (an easy task, if a unit could be "kidnapped" for a day or two), you will have access to *every* machine manufactured by Diebold.

*Option 3: Make your own "smart card."*

Not all of the options will require a change of career. Many of the voting machines—for example, Diebold's, which are being used in more than 6,000 precincts nationwide—are operated by "smart cards" that are handed out to voters as they check in at their polling places. These smart cards perform no cryptographic function; that is, they do not try very hard to verify that the terminal they are communicating with is legitimate, and vice versa. If you can figure out the protocol that the card and the machine use to communicate with each other, then you can create a homemade smart card that allows for unlimited voting. (Programmable smart cards sell at computer shops for as little as $3.50 each.)

To figure out the protocol, you could fashion a sort of wiretap device to insert into the smart-card slot, allowing you to eavesdrop on the machine-to-card dialogue. Of course, far easier would be to consult the source codes of the various machines. Although these source codes are proprietary, in at least one case they have found their way into public circulation. Avi Rubin, the Johns Hopkins University computer scientist who was the first to warn of the possibility of smart-card attacks, was able to conduct his research because large portions of Diebold's source code had been discovered on one of the company's publicly accessible websites. (The code was stumbled upon during a routine Google search.) And in December the network of VoteHere, a voting-machine company based in Bellevue, Washington, was breached by a hacker; VoteHere officials have refused to reveal what information, if any, was stolen.

*Option 4: Think demographically.*

Perhaps the easiest way to use voting machines to tip an election will simply be to crash the machines of the most partisan districts. The smart-card-based machines are shut co using "ender cards," which poll wo ers insert at the end of the electi day. If you make a smart card th mimics an ender card, you could sh down or slow voting for hours in, s Orange County, or in a heav African-American district. (O brand of voting machine, Sequoi AVC Edge, does not even require ender card to shut down; the mach can be flipped into "supervisor mo simply by pressing a button on t back. If poll workers neglect to lo the wire seal that protects the butt interfering with the election will be easy as flicking a light switch.)

In their brutal simplicity, these fi most accessible options recall some the most effective vote-hacki schemes from elections gone by: su pressing the African-American vo whether through confusion or outri intimidation; delivering voting boo late, or not at all, to precincts th vote in an objectionable manner there is anything to be learned fr the history of election stealing—i for that matter, of computer hacking it is that any possible tricks will tried sooner or later. And, given t porousness of voting-machine secu ty, some of these tricks will doubtl succeed. Having been presented opportunity to make vote-hack nearly impossible, our governm seems merely to have handed the al ity to do so from one class of crimi to another.

—*Brendan I. Koer*

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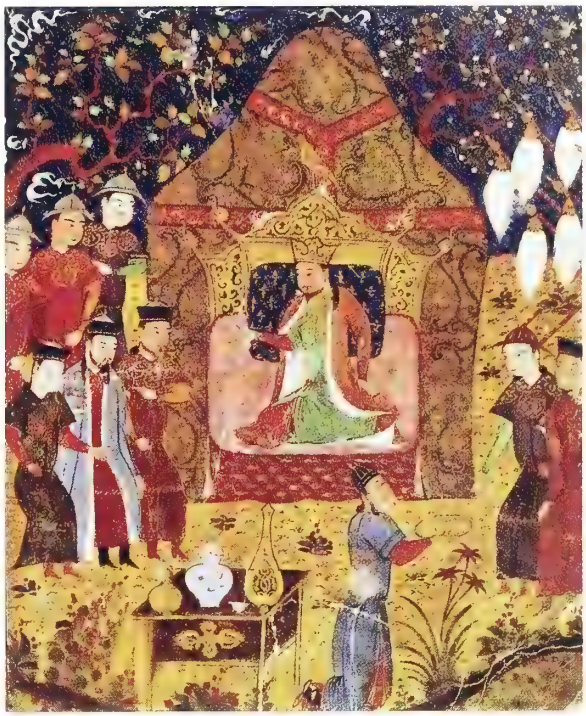
*Andrew Meier, a former Moscow co spondent for* Time, *is author of* Bl Earth: A Journey Through Russia ter the Fall *(W.W. Norton).*

*Tim Shorrock is a freelance writer ba in Silver Spring, Maryland. He can reached at tshorrock51@hotmail.com*

*Brendan I. Koerner is a fellow at the N America Foundation and a contribu editor of* Wired. *His last article for Ha er's Magazine, "Speak of the Devil," peared in the April 2003 issue.*

# EW BOOKS

## John Leonard



e will get to new biographies of Kingman Brewster and Eugene McCarthy in a ute, but not before spending some ity time with another illustrious er of young men. In

(Crown, $25), anpologist Jack Weatherford seeks escue the Mongol warlord from tern stereotypes of barbarism and dthirstiness. In what way were his aviors more atrocious than those Alexander, Charlemagne, or oleon? After uniting the untidy es of the steppes early in the thirth century, abolishing aristocrativilege, creating a meritocracy that arded loyalty and achievement, establishing "history's largest free-e zone," didn't he in-t China and Russia e know them? Didn't ancel taxes for doc- and teachers, ordain ostal system and a versal alphabet, outtorture and legislate gious freedom, even enghis himself could gine no other god the big blue sky ve him?



haucer admired him, taire didn't, and Europe still has ntmares about his Danube pit stop. what Europe remembers in trauic folklore as slaughter, rapine, and ions of refugees, Weatherford—a sionist, a contrarian, a defense atney, and a closet nomad—sees as ural exchange. So what if the Mon- wrote calendars instead of novels, t bridges instead of forts, and could neither cast metal nor bake bread? They also gave us firearms, printing, the compass, and the abacus, besides teaching the West to wear pants.

Much of what Weatherford tells us of the early days has been pieced together only in the last two decades, from documents written in an exasperating cipher and known as *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Even translated from Chinese characters representing thirteenth-century Mongolian sounds, the *Secret History* apparently depends on geographical keys that couldn't be interpreted so long as the Soviet Union controlled the homeland. Weatherford, who thought he was researching a book on the Silk Route, was lucky enough to end up, in 1998, with a team of scholars on the banks of the Onon River. Using the *Secret History* as both a map and a kind of shamanistic box kite, they found the hillock where the infant Temujin had been born to an outcast family in 1162. They then followed the little boy into shame, abduction, slavery, and murder, after which he became big enough to create a nation and lead its armies from the Onon to the Indus to the Volga.

It's hard to think of anyone else who rose from such inauspicious beginnings to something so awesome, except maybe Jesus. We watch Genghis's Golden Horde on the march, an army organized in the tens of thousands. Because all of them, including officers, are illiterate, orders move by word of mouth, composed in rhyme for easy memorizing and set to a fixed melody known to every warrior—"like learning a new verse to a song that he already knew." Weatherford loves such local color. On these steppes, looking up at wolves and hawks, the anthropologist sees himself as Sitting Bull or Crazy Horse, as a bedouin or Cain. Like the late Bruce Chatwin in Africa, he has been persuaded that Paradise was never a garden but, instead, a waste of white thorns.

So we turn to the sad story of the Wasp "gentlemen elites" in Geoffrey Kabaservice's

(Henry Holt, $30) with a measuring stick that finds them short. Who cares that this "leadership class" would be so disappointed in the rest of us after their long careers as philosopher-kings in a

*his Khan in his Tent*, by Rashid al-Din © Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris/Bridgeman Art Library,
*it of Genghis Khan* © National Palace Museum, Taipei/Bridgeman Art Library

country that never much resembled Plato's Republic to begin with? Hadn't they enjoyed more than their fair share of life's amenities, growing up with an English governess and an Irish maid, going to private schools, becoming top private clubs, sailing off Cape Cod, tanning in Antigua, graduating from Harvard or Yale or Princeton, Washington lawyers, Wall Street fixers, presidents of universities and foundations, and/or clandestine intelligence agents? Maybe, after race riots in our city streets, despair in our public schools, humiliation in Vietnam, and thugs in the White House, more of them should have fallen on a sword.

My potato-famine animus probably shows. I was the scholarship boy who married into this establishment and thus became his own class enemy. I have actually been in rooms with McGeorge Bundy, Cyrus Vance, and John V. Lindsay, plus half the membership of the Friday Evening Club in Cambridge. I'm not saying they were any worse than anybody else, but they did think they were better. Only Paul Moore, who chose, after Yale, war, and the civil-rights movement, to become an Episcopal archbishop, seems to have surprised himself and the rest of them. Of Brewster, whose ancestry went back past the *Mayflower* to the Magna Carta, it was remarked during his Yale presidency that he wanted to be the first man ever *appointed* to the Oval Office. "I was never sure if Kingman believed in God, but I was sure that God believed in Kingman," said a wicked William Sloane Coffin. About another member of the charmed circle, a political opponent distributed a bumper sticker: VOTE FOR ELLIOT RICHARDSON, HE'S BETTER THAN YOU ARE. Because Richardson behaved honorably during Watergate, even quoting Homer in Greek, we forget all the times he should have resigned but didn't.

Kabaservice likes these liberal Republicans more than David Halberstam did. He aspires to be the anti-Halberstam, mourning the loss of their "brains and breeding," noblesse oblige, "pragmatic idealism," devotion to "process," respect for "civility," feelings of guilt about their entitlements, even their inner amies: "Kennedy's out-of-control philandering offended men like Brewster, Bundy and Richardson, who by all accounts were virgins until marriage and never cheated on their wives." This makes them a lot less interesting to read about than Genghis Khan, but *The Guardians* makes up for it with policy wonk inside info on why a sexist like Brewster wound up letting women into Yale, how Richardson got into the Army and Bundy into the Navy by memorizing eye charts, what at last moved Cyrus Vance actually to quit a job, and why a Mayor Lindsay was no match for Albert Shanker and Mike Quill, much less Robert Moses.

On the one hand, *The Guardians* wants to explain how sixties extremism crushed these liberals, left and right. On another hand, any book about the American establishment that fails to explore the corrupt intimate relations among universities, foundations, corporations, intelligence agencies, and the Pentagon is twiddling its thumbs while the cowboys, greedheads, yahoos, and kamikazes take over the country with the connivance of its Supreme Court. There is even a third hand. Henry Kissinger is said by Kabaservice to have mused aloud to Richard Nixon "that if the United States would benefit from the assassination of any public figure, it would be Kingman Brewster." Dr. K., of course, is a great kidder. Like Pinochet.

Rather than mourn, Dominic Sandbrook scolds. His



(Knopf, $25.95) is a peculiar compost of doctoral dissertation, incident report, and kvetch. Dutifully, it follows half-Irish half-German hockey playing Gene from his midwestern childhood through his years in the wilderness to his rapturing up to Congress in 1948 — nineteen year-old high school principal; a would-be priest booted out of the Benedi- tine seminary for intellectual pr- d- War Department code cracker, a h- band to Abigail, a teacher of soci- ology, a reader of Mauriac, Chesterto- *Commonweal*, Dorothy Day, and t- neo-Thomists; and a Minnes- Farmer-Labor Party politician a- Hubert Humphrey protégé with pressed tendencies toward medie- scholasticism.

But once Sandbrook gets to t- whistling blue ether of Washingt- D.C., he is less impressed. In spite McCarthy's impeccable liberal v- ing record, there were those skipp- roll calls and his cozying up House Speaker Sam Rayburn. F- bright's Foreign Relations Comm- tee may have been a gradua- school seminar for the jun- senator, turning him against the - in Vietnam, but look at him h- the oil lobby. McCarthy's dis- pointment at not getting the v- nod in Atlantic City in 1964, a- LBJ teased him, is judged by his - ographer to be disproportiona- And Sandbrook seems shock- (shocked!) that the 1968 anti- candidacy transcended the symb- ic; that sometime after New Ha- shire the candidate decided he ac- ally wanted to win.

Sandbrook's pejoratives thick- like thieves—vanity, laziness, "c- temptuous eccentricity," "mispla- pride and unrelenting jealousy. only, we are told, a grudge-nurs- Gene had endorsed Hubert earlie- 1968, then Nixon, instead of libe- ism, might have been defeated. C- me a break dance. Sandbro- maybe because he's English, is to- deaf to what Philip Roth calls " indigenous American berserk." sixties mysteriously omit the bl- and the crazies. They also o- moral heroism and bankruptcy. I- many other liberals, I only asse- ed—or is it relented?—to pull - lever for Hubert once I was in - polling booth. This was becau- had been in Chicago that sum- as a reporter, when Hubert's gun- scuttled across the convention f- to kill the compromise peace pla- If an Englishman can't tell the - ference between a grudge and a p- ciple, Ireland is at last explained.



The Art Archive / Photo

# HERE MUST I BEGIN
# O BE

## ıy Davenport's heretical fictions

› *Wyatt Mason*

ussed in this essay:

*Death of Picasso: New & Selected Writing*, by Guy Davenport. Shoemaker & Hoard, 2003. 380 pages. $26.



ation by N. Ascencios

One consistent feature of truly innovative writing has been how it lays claim to a previ-ly overlooked milieu, turning t once was tedium or even taboo appropriate material for fiction. ıbert made art out of the shallow-s of the bourgeoisie; Joyce al-ed the drama of one's own bodily ctions to play a prominent role in proceedings; Barth made the cess and principles of storytelling viable literature. For the young er, then, in addition to learning the craft upon which all quality depends, much of the drama of the early years involves finding, or failing to discover, his subject.

The early work of American writer Guy Davenport offers an illustration of this proposition. Author of forty-seven books of commentary, poetry, translations, and fiction, and winner of a MacArthur "Genius" Fellowship, Davenport published his first writings in a Duke University literary magazine in the 1940s. So regular a contributor to *The Archive* did he become that the magazine's young editor in chief, R. D. Loomis (who went on to be executive editor of Random House), offered an apologia for the suspicious abundance of Davenport's contributions: "To some it might seem that he has an 'in.' The truth is that Guy simply writes more and better than the other contributors."

Readers acquainted with Davenport's later essays would find themselves on familiar ground in the May 1948 issue of *The Archive*. There is Davenport's book review of *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910–1913*, in which the college senior writes, "Many of Kafka's earlier stories appear here in fragmentary form. . . . This book will, in time, become the finest index to Kafka's work and life." Or his essay, entitled "Jackson Marshall: American Primitive," wherein the young critic makes a case for a St. Louis writer no one had heard of: "There's a writer whom few people will probably get a chance, at present, to read. . . . Jackson Marshall, 34, is a primitive writer, just as Grandma Moses, Horace Pippin, and Henri Rousseau are primitive painters." Or his profile of illustrator and engraver Claire Leighton, in which Davenport freezes the image, and idea, of the demanding artist engaged in tireless enterprise: "She taught art at Duke for two years, but quit abruptly when she realized that the co-eds she was working with were not near as zealous and serious about their drawing as they should be."

These early texts provide a jolt of recognition: their authoritative manner and absence of jargon are perfectly congruent with Davenport's six decades of subsequent literary and art criticism. How surprising, then, to come upon the many short stories Davenport contributed to *The Archive* and see that they resemble none of the fiction Davenport has written since. Take "That Lonesome Road to Macon," in which a young black man named Foster dreams of leaving his small, white, racist town for a better life elsewhere:

> Every house had its light. They were flimsy, unpainted, weathered clapboard houses. Their insides smelled of tallow and kerosene and human flesh. Every house had its black washpot in the backyard and its flowerpots of geraniums and ferns on the frontporch. A V-8 Ford jangled its fenders as it cut into the roughsurface rut of a road that went through St.

*ıtt Mason's last review for* Harper's *azine, "The Critic as Artist," appeared ıe July 2003 issue. He is currently a w at the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cull-Center for Scholars and Writers at the York Public Library.*

> [illegible] Miss [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible]. Every minute [illegible] into fists and he breathed with deep inhaling because he liked to feel himself breathe. God! Why can't a fellow pick up and [illegible] to do? Than the hell make [illegible] and it's not easy. You grow up [illegible] (rolling hoops and teasing girls and putting pins on the railroad track for Number Ten to flatten out). You got your first job at the fishmarket and rode your bicycle through St. Paul's on your first delivery with all the pride [illegible]

These vivid, tactile details ("putting pins on the railroad track for Number Ten to flatten out", "A V-8 Ford jangled its fenders"; a road is a "length of dust and clay") evoke a childhood spent in a southern country town—such as Anderson, South Carolina, where Davenport was born in 1927. Another story from *The Archive*, "A Visit from Marie," features a young, newly married black woman who entrusts her life savings to a white woman she knows only slightly, uncertain that it would be safe around her new husband. And in "Three Dead Flies in a Goblet of Wine," a well-to-do white girl's long wait for a young man whom she fancies to call is played out against conversations with her florid old uncle and a downtrodden black maid. In tone and language, subject and theme, all of Davenport's early stories were Southern Stories.

And yet, during the two decades that followed Duke, while Davenport wrote hundreds of articles that appeared in organs both obscure (*Curled Wire Chronicle*, *Arion*) and mainstream (*Life*, *National Review*), not another jot of published fiction arrived. When, twenty-two years later, Davenport began publishing short stories again, they were unrecognizable beside their antecedents. The eight volumes of stories Davenport has published since 1974—totaling more than 1,600 pages—feature only one story, two pages long, set in the South.

Freedom from regional limitations is a familiar trope of twentieth-century literature. As James Joyce wrote in *A Portrait of*

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

al silence. Some of the details of account were harvested from Brod's biography of Kafka, oth- rom Kafka's own newspaper ac- nt of the air show, also titled e Aeroplanes at Brescia." It is cal of the echoes to be found ughout Davenport's work that ased his first mature, published of fiction on Kafka's first pub- d writing of any kind.

et six years after the Wright hers spent their world-changing ve seconds above the bluffs of y Hawk, Davenport's tale has little plot: as with many of his es, we pass time in the presence nen experiencing the world in e company. The trio arrives in , attentive witnesses to the air v and its environs. What holds story together, in the absence of id progression of events, is a qui- etwork of images observed. Take opening paragraph:

afka stood on the seawall at Riva nder the early September sky. But for s high-button shoes and flaring coat, s easy stance had an athletic clarity. e walked with the limberness of a cing cyclist. Otto Brod, with whom e had spent the morning discussing oving pictures and strolling along ne shore under the voluble pines and llow villas of the Via Ponale, lit a gar and suggested a light beer before nch. A wash of sweet air from the ke rattled a circle of pigeons, who apped up into a shuttle of gulls. A sherman in a blue apron reclined on ne harbor steps smoking a small pipe. n a staff over a perfectly square ilding rippled the Austrian flag with s black, two-headed eagle.

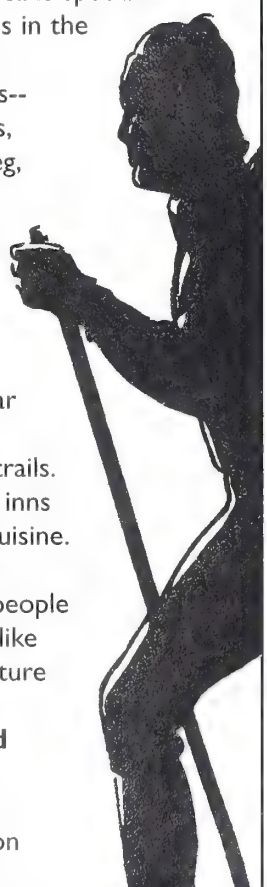
e language is deceptively plain: llow villas," "sweet air," "blue on," "small pipe"—most of the ds are of one or two syllables, t of the phrases irreducibly direct. beneath the bright calm of this arently simple surface, Davenport ewing a texture of turbulence. paragraph contains a host of im- relating to flight: an empty sky, a tering coat, a cyclist's agility (ear- lanes were powered in part by aling pilots), trees speaking with d, rising smoke, birds, and a flut- ng flag flying the image of a ible-headed eagle. You do not consciously note the underlying agitation upon first reading; you register it, though, and it builds, deliberately, to the release toward which the story moves. "No aeroplanes were in the air when they arrived." And when Kafka and the Brod brothers do see the planes, when the brink of flight is reached, nothing rises: "The propeller was stubborn, and worse than stubborn, for it stalled after a few hopeful whirrs as often as it refused to spin at all." The possibility of flight ebbs, and then:

> It seemed to slide rather than roll, and darted one way and another like a goose on a frozen river. Kafka was appalled by its desperation and failure of grace before he reflected that the most agile birds are clownish on the ground. Surely there was danger that it would tear itself to pieces before it got into the air. Now it was making a long curve to the left, hopping and sliding. Then it wagged its wings and flew up, bouncing once in the air while no one breathed....
> —Franz! Max said before he considered what he was saying, why are there tears in your eyes?
> —I don't know, Kafka said. I don't know.

We, however, do. The sight of something soaring inspires the heart to rise along with it. What makes the story's end moving, and very different from how a writer like Joyce would handle it, is where Davenport centers the gravity of Kafka's epiphany: we are kept outside of Kafka at the moment he feels most. The last image Davenport gives us, despite all the careful preparation for the release of flight, is not of grandly rising planes but of one friend turning to another, to acknowledge a moment of emotion.

Like Brod, we are witnesses—not to the official narrative of history but to the reality of experience. The success of this fictional moment does not depend on our knowing anything about the real Franz Kafka. Still, if we should happen to have a passing familiarity with Kafka's dark comedies of human bondage—a man turned into a beetle, an artist starving behind bars, an innocent accused of guilt—the visible release from earthly ties provides a meaningful


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counterpoint. And should we recall that Keats's [illegible] *blackbird* (a fact that Davenport slips in to another story in *The Death of Picasso*), there is an added poignancy in seeing this earthbound man, who made black humor out of that which weighs upon us, responding to a moment of release.

By gently guiding the reader to such moments, Davenport's art cultivates our attention—an attitude that Davenport imbues with an underlying moral weight. As he posited in a 1982 *New York Times Book Review* essay, "Two people attentive to a detail of the world make a society, and the object they find significant has crossed over from meaninglessness to symbol. Art is always the replacing of indifference by attention."

In Davenport's work such replacements of indifference frequently find narrative form with men sharing respites from the ceaseless separateness of being. Conversations are one means to that concord, as when naturalist and philosopher George Santayana, in "Dinner at the Bank of England," visits a British captain in his quarters. Santayana begins:

> —Spirit lives in matter, which gives rise to it. We are integral with matter. We eat, we breathe, we generate, we ache. Existence is painful.
>
> Do try the walnuts. They're excellent. Do you think we live in good times or bad? I mean, do you want us all to be materialists?
>
> I am content to let every man and woman be themselves. I am not them. When man is at last defeated and his mind bound with ungiving chains, it will be through a cooperation of sciences and what now passes for liberalism. . . . Liberalism in its triumphant maturity will be its opposite, an oppressive tyranny and a repression through benevolence which no tyrant however violent has ever achieved. . . . There is no fanaticism like sweet reason. You are as yet free, being wonderfully young, and having the advantage of the liberty of the army.
>
> Liberty, you say.
>
> The most freedom anyone can enjoy is in constraint that looks the other way from time to time.

Here, the beauty of the conversation is, in part, a function of its fact: that an old Spanish aesthetician could seek, and find, good company at the hearth of a young, handsome Br[illegible] soldier is intrinsically cheering.

Beyond the fact of it, however, the larger import of this fictio[illegible] banter. There is something of B[illegible]ett's disjointed gallows humo[illegible] Davenport's parrying "Existenc[illegible] painful" with "Do try the waln[illegible] Like all rich humor, though, th[illegible] built on a lean truth: walnuts, a [illegible]bol of the sustenance that hospit[illegible] affords, can indeed make exist[illegible] less painful. And Santayana, who[illegible] lieves "we are integral with mat[illegible] puts forward an idea of freedom [illegible] echoes Davenport's own imper[illegible] of liberation through the recogn[illegible] of certain limits: "The most free[illegible] anyone can enjoy is in constr[illegible] that looks the other way from tim[illegible] time." Rather than succumb to [illegible] "tyranny" of liberalism and the [illegible]naticism of sweet reason," bot[illegible] which are impositions on the ma[illegible]al realities of human experie[illegible] Santayana is "content to let e[illegible] man and woman be themselves."

The most daring of Dav[illegible]port's stories attempt to [illegible]matize a world in which [illegible] and women can be themselves. [illegible] take their instigation from the [illegible] of Charles Fourier (1772–183[illegible] French philosopher whose writ[illegible] probed the unhappiness of [illegible] mankind. That unhappiness, Fo[illegible] believed, could be redressed thr[illegible] a system of his devising called [illegible] Harmony, and many of his und[illegible]ing assumptions resonate with [illegible] tayana's musings in "The Ban[illegible] England." As Davenport explai[illegible] again in *The Paris Review*, last ye[illegible]

> [Fourier's] perception was that we [illegible] made a mess of what we had absol[illegible] no need to make a mess of, th[illegible] can live far more successfully in[illegible] man relations. First of all we mus[illegible] cide on a unit in which to live. [illegible] Fourier was constantly saying, "[illegible] not want to change human nat[illegible] while saying under his breath, [illegible] cause it's impossible." He simply w[illegible] ed to accommodate it. Everybod[illegible] different desires. And in the Harm[illegible] you have a society that is either [illegible] ant or wise enough to allow for th[illegible]

Fourier theorized a complete sy[illegible]

ow that unit would function, ything from a new frankness of an interactions to a new relaship with animals (four-year-olds ld ride around on German shepis) to an elaborate prescription which houseplant should go in window on a given day of the . In addition to finding Fourier ghtful for devising so baroque a m of living with happiness as its Davenport is most deeply interd in Fourier's anticipation of, challenge to, Freud. "Practically ything Freud got hold of," Davort says, "Fourier had already di-d, and drawn different conclus. So I became fascinated, and percolated and percolated."

wo thirds of *The Death of Picasso* evoted to Davenport's stories in Fourierist vein. Set in a world in ch certain received ideas about an interaction and psychologidevelopment are revoked, the es read as if the Fall never hapd and Freud was never there to mble the pieces of our shame.

espite this grounding in philoical and theoretical particulars, e from these stories are Daven-'s famous names—no Kafkas or tayanas, no Fouriers or Freuds. ey are replaced by names like ckel, Magnus, Holger, Jos, lto, and Rutger, Danish names the pre-adolescent boys who ulate the Scandinavian Everyd of Davenport's imagination in ch these stories are set. The ndinavia of it hardly matters; Davenport been born in Copenen, he probably would have set stories in Kentucky. An imagiy Denmark is sufficiently exotic distant that it can serve as backo for Davenport's reimagining of stern civilization along Fourierist s. Fourier found the bourgeois ily unit suffocating and murder-. Davenport seeks to reinvent it network of boys who are mems of a scout troop. No scout troop omplete, of course, without a ut leader, and in that capacity enport casts Hugo Tvemunding aterfamilias, "assistant Classics ster and gym instructor at NFS ndtvig, Troop Commander of jderkorps 235, and doctoral candidate in Theology." Hugo has a girlfriend called Mariana and a philosophy called humanism:

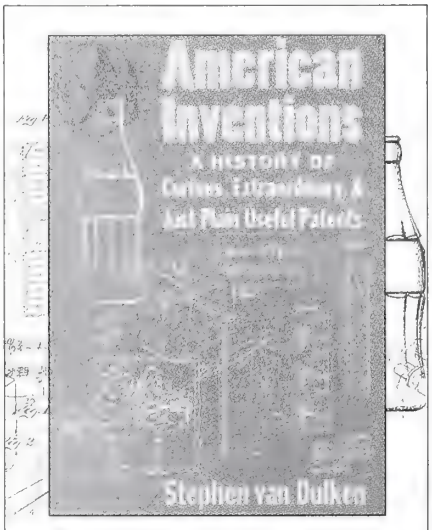
> I have only my Mariana, that delightful girl, and my classical scholarship, and my Boy Scouts, and my sober round of reading, gymnastics, my thesis for the Theological Faculty at the university, my painting, teaching, learning. I can share what I feel. Not always well, but the possibility is there. I believe what the Boy Scout Manual says: Forget Yourself.

Hugo is a paragon of balance: body and mind, teaching and learning, religion and science, art and philosophy, community service and individual betterment. Naturally, conspicuously, his physical perfection is Ideal. So too his pack of boys: they are, in Fourierist form, all bright, open, curious, and creative. And, without question, interested in exploring their sexuality, from which Davenport certainly does not shy away.

In one of Davenport's new stories, "The Owl of Minerva," two scouts, Adam and Sholto, stray from their troop and happen upon a derelict seasonal house. Together, they break in (using penknives, damaging nothing) and explore. With "his chin on Sholto's shoulder" Adam cuts through vines and crosses the threshold. Once inside, they play house: they sweep, they clean, they mop floors, and they "mouth mimic kisses." Muddy from their exertions, the boys strip and bathe together:

> —You're beautiful, Sholto, wet and shiny. . . .
> —I'm a year older. Shouldn't I be the one to get fresh?
> —In friendly numbers the divisors of the one that add up to the other, and vice versa, are a new assembling of the other number's components. Pythagoras. A friend is yourself in another person.
> —. . . Anyway, I like you. You're scrumptious.
> —Our dicks are the same size.
> —Mine had better grow.

"The Owl of Minerva" is Davenport's variation on a theme that has interested writers throughout literature—the parable of innocents in a garden. William Golding's bloodthirsty children of *Lord of the Flies*


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are the recent, cynical permutations of the Enlightenment ironies of Voltaire's *Candide* offer another, more satirical alternative; and the book of Genesis, of course, has its own, characteristically punitive, version. Davenport's Garden, abandoned but pristine, is a world of potential waiting to be seized. Unaware of what befell the prior tenants, innocents fill the house, and each other, with endless stores of goodness. As such, "The Owl of Minerva"—a title that refers to the dark condition of human ignorance into which illuminating wisdom at last enters—ends not with a figurative expulsion from unfathomable paradise but with a literal embrace of its earthly availability: after groping together in the dark, the boys hold hands and talk about what they'll eat for breakfast.

That Davenport's two boys might forge joyful bonds in nature should be an acceptable alternative to Golding's version, in which children left to their own devices hack one another apart. Alas, few critics have seen it that way. When a seventy-five-year-old man writes about little boys falling in love, describes them admiring each other's dicks, rubbing noses, blowing kisses to each other, it seems his work can't escape the most literal interpretations. As Davenport explained to *The Paris Review*:

> When *Tatlin!* [Davenport's first collection of stories] was accepted for publication, I remember being anxious and frightened, truly frightened, that reviewers would say, "This is pretentious." What they said is, "This is obscene."

A notice in *The New York Review of Books*, in 1975, went so far as to dismiss *Tatlin!* the book that contained "The Aeroplanes at Brescia," with: "People who desire an easy method of learning the anatomy of the genitalia may find these stories valuable." The *New York Times*, too, has lamented Davenport's fictions as "erotica that's often eloquent, but unsettlingly prurient." And in *Boulevard* last year, the poet Robert Kelly described Davenport's work in this mode as "polymathic pederasty."

If we take a moment to reflect, not upon the vague and frightening reality of the outer world—a world in which [illegible] let children play unattended for fear, reasonable fear, that some sexual horror will befall them—but upon the specific and illuminating world forged in a story like "The Owl of Minerva," we see no harm befalling these imaginary children. They are alone, in nature. They are absolutely safe. They are capable, playful, kind. They clean a stranger's house, clean themselves, love each other. And nowhere in any of Davenport's stories are his children witnessed having sex. Thus the notion that this could be pornography, or pederasty, is difficult to support.

That so many of Davenport's readers and critics have seen naked boys and thought smut, have seen love and decided it "unsettling," is an expression of the problem Davenport wants us to get past, not sexually but intellectually. For what these stories do—if we can escape what Davenport has called "our end-of-the-century comstockery and liberal puritanism"—is encourage us to question what kind of world we have built for ourselves. It is as Davenport has Santayana tell his soldier in "Dinner at the Bank of England": "that all thought and therefore all action stands on a quicksand of tacit assumptions. What we believe is what we are and what we expect of others." Davenport's Fourierist fictions are figurative expressions of a desire for release from the narrowly defined jails—verbal, philosophical, practical—that our beliefs can erect. They are no more operating manuals for how to build a civilization in which boys might endlessly frolic naked than *Hamlet* is an exposé about the paranormal or the *Inferno* a piece of travel writing.

The longest story in *The Death of Picasso* is Davenport's short novel "Wo es war, soll Ich werden." Its eighty-nine nonlinear sections feature Hugo and his scouts freely pursuing friendship, amusement, conversation, knowledge, and love. If these many visits to the Garden seem repetitive, they are so in the manner of Picasso's sixty portraits of Fernande Olivier, or Van Gogh's thirty-nine of himself, or Cezanne's scores of Mont St. Victoires: visits to a destination that rewards repeated consideration, exhausting neither representation nor interpretation.

The novel's title is a line from one of Freud's lectures. Given Davenport's appreciation of Fourier's havings divined, and drawn different conclusions" from those made by Freud on the basis of similar observations, one should be prepared for a dose of authorial mischief. It manifests, in part, in Hugo's comment to a friend:

> You were interested in Freud's enigmatic statement that *where it was, there must I begin to be*. The oyster makes a pearl around an irritant grain of sand. Nature compensates. A tree blown down will put out a bracing root to draw it upright again. Deaf Beethoven composed music more glorious than when he could hear. Stutterers write fluently. That is, one source of strength seems to be weakness.

Hugo's translation of Freud, "Where it was, there must I begin to be," is very different from the standard version by James Strachey: "Where Id was, there Ego shall be." For Strachey's Freud, Ego overwhelms Id; unconscious desires are sublimated pathologically into personality. For Davenport's Freud, "I" is not a technical trumping of what nature gives us but a natural, beautiful outgrowth of experience, however painful.

Of course, there are no right translations, only more or less interesting interpretations. If it is true, as Wittgenstein had it, that the limits of language are the limits of the mind, then it is also true that some language is more limiting than others. If the language of fiction is to be of any lasting use, as Davenport urges us again and again to see, it must struggle to define—and, in so doing, maintain—moments of liberty. In his fiction, Davenport has succeeded in that regard, finding new ways to dramatize one, suggestive question: What if we were free? In their language, their form, their intelligence and affection, stories remain some of our most eloquent, individual, and lasting answers to that inexhaustible question.

# T TAKES A STADIUM

## ill it play in Pittsfield?

*Matthew Stevenson*

ıssed in this essay:

*Ball: My Life and Hard Times Trying to Save an Old Ballpark*, by Jim Bouton. ulldog Publishing, 2003. 405 pages. $24.95.
*Four: The Final Pitch*, by Jim Bouton. Bulldog Publishing, 2000. 528 pages. 24.95.

By the age of twenty-five, Jim Bouton, who had struggled to play even high school baseball, an all-star, had won twenty games ne season for the New York Yan-, and had pitched in two different ld Series, winning two games in 4 against the St. Louis Cardinals. eammate of Mickey Mantle, itey Ford, Yogi Berra, and Roger is, Bouton was a great Yankee e to bridge the dynasties of Casey ıgel and Ralph Houk to others would carry pennants to the Sta- n in the middle and late 1960s.



both Bouton's and the Yankees' mise faded in 1965, and neither d better in the years that followed. ıton developed a sore arm and lost more games than he won, and in 1968 he was sold to a yet-to-play expansion team.

By good fortune, for both books and baseball, Bouton's new club became the Seattle Pilots, a team that lasted only one season, 1969. That year for the Pilots, and later for the Houston Astros, Bouton pitched with some distinction as a knuckleball reliever—the heat having left his fastball. But his real contribution was the locker-room diary he kept that was published in 1970 as *Ball Four*, which more recently the New York Public Library named one of its "Books of the Century." The initial press run was 5,000. But after the commissioner of baseball condemned the book, charging Bouton with the equivalent of blasphemy and baseball heresy, *Ball Four* sold 500,000 copies in hardback and another 5 million in paperback.

Bouton understands baseball's hierarchy, observing correctly that "if Mickey Mantle had written *Ball Four* he would have gotten away with it. A relief pitcher on the Seattle Pilots has no business being a deviant." Because he had tarnished the reputation of, among others, Mantle, he was cashiered from baseball. Among the blasphemies that Bouton committed was describing Mantle hitting home runs while hungover and leading ballplayers to hotel roofs to peep into windows—a recreation known to those in the trade as "beaver shooting." Writing of Joe Pepitone, he reveals that the first baseman "has two different hairpieces. He's got a massive piece, which he wears when he's going out, and a smaller one to wear under his baseball cap. He calls it his game piece."

To be sure, Bouton remembers Mantle pushing "little kids aside when they wanted his autograph, and the times when he was snotty to reporters." But Bouton, better than most of Mantle's biographers, also captures his warmth, boyishness, and sense of humor. "What we do know, though," Bouton writes, "is that the face he showed in the clubhouse, as opposed to the one he reserved for the outside world, was often one of great merriment." For a long time a rumor circulated that Mantle would not attend Old Timers' Day at Yankee Stadium if Bouton were there. But before Mantle died, he and Bouton had a warm reconciliation—further proof that although *Ball Four* broke literary form in 1970, by the mid-1990s it was as quaint as wool uniforms and the suicide squeeze.



Although celebrity Yankees, like Mantle, Maris, and Pepitone, make cameo appearances in *Ball Four*, the heart of the book describes the expansion Seattle Pilots, who have as many memorable crewmen as one of Herman Melville's whaling boats. The manager, Joe Schultz—"short, portly, bald, ruddy-faced, twinkly-

*thew Stevenson, a contributing editor to* per's Magazine, *is the author of* Letters ransit: Essays on Travel, History, tics and Family Life Abroad *and the* ıcoming Mentioned in Dispatches. *He in Switzerland.*

ings by Eric Hanson

eyed"—is a genial Ahab who weaves allusions to Budweiser into many of his sentences. The pitching coach is the former New York Giant Sal Maglie, a.k.a. Sal the Barber: "He still looks like he'd knock down his grandmother." When some of the Pilots are filling out a questionnaire from the team publicity department—"What's the most difficult thing about playing major-league baseball?"—first baseman Mike Hegan responds: "Explaining to your wife why *she* needs a penicillin shot for *your* kidney infection."

Despite the book's camp-bus humor, the baseball commissioner said Bouton had done the game a "grave disservice." Dick Young called him a "social leper." The literary criticism of Pete Rose was more direct. He stood on the steps of the dugout, the next time the Cincinnati Reds faced Bouton, yelling, "Fuck you, Shakespeare." (When they bumped into each other at a sports banquet two years ago, Rose admitted, "You know, I never even read your fucking book.") But the threat posed to baseball was not the revelation about Pepitone's game piece or that "Yastrzemski has a bit of dog in him." Instead, as Bouton writes in the afterword to the re-issued *Ball Four*, the book "revealed, in great detail, just how ballplayers' salaries were 'negotiated' ...how owners abused and manipulated players by taking advantage of their one way contract"—the so-called reserve clause under which professional baseball, with antitrust exemption from Congress, operated like the Texas Railroad Commission. Although it was not Bouton's intention, *Ball Four* loaded the bases for the million-dollar runs that came with free agency.

Baseball may have wanted to be through with Jim Bouton in 1970, but he still had more innings left, both with his knuckleball and his pen. He retired from the Houston Astros after the 1970 season, then worked as a New York sports broadcaster, covering some of the same players who had panned his book. For love of the game, he continued to play independent and minor-league baseball in the summer, for such teams as the Teaneck Blues, the Portland Mavericks, and the Englewood Rangers. In 1978, at age thirty-nine, Bouton convinced Ted Turner to let him pitch in the Atlanta Braves farm system, getting called up to the big leagues in September, where he started several games and won one—his first victory in the majors. During this time he also appeared in a Robert Altman movie, invented Big League Chew (bubble gum that is shredded like tobacco), and traveled the country as a businessman, motivational speaker, writer, and inventor. Sometimes he would call on his old teammates, such as Steve Hovley, known as "Orbit" for his spacey qualities. Among other subjects, they touched on religion. Always insightful, Hovley remarked: "Religion is like baseball... great game, bad owners."

Remarried, children grown, Bouton moved to the Berkshires in the 1990s, his only connection to baseball being occasional starts for a team sponsored by Mama's Pizza and for the Saugerties Dutchmen. In the Berkshires organized baseball has been played since 1892 at Wahconah Park, located in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a town that has had eight teams in the last thirty-five years. Both Casey Stengel and Lou Gehrig played at Wahconah. In one of his many comebacks, Bouton had a tryout there for the Texas Rangers. The roof and the toilets leak, and the seats are wooden benches. But, like Fenway Park and Wrigley Field, it is a connection to baseball before Astroturf, domed stadiums, steroids, corked bats, and the San Diego Chicken. And it is one of the oldest minor-league parks in America, which may explain why Pittsfield wanted to tear it down.

Before Bouton got involved, the local political establishment tried to spend $18.5 million that it didn't have to build a new stadium. By chance, the lot selected for the new ballpark was owned by the local newspaper, the *Berkshire Eagle*, which ran a series of editorials equating the proposed stadium with a new birth of freedom and the chance to revive the city's sagging economy. Not feeling a spare $18.5 million in their pockets, the voters of Pittsfield turned down the proposition, but that did not stop either the mayor, the newspaper, their benefactors at General Electric, or the Parks Commission from trying to revive the idea.

In his introduction to *Foul Ball*, bringing to local politics what *Ball* brought to baseball, Bouton writes historic ballpark soon to be abandoned a government that ignores its citi a newspaper at war with its read the curious involvement of Gen Electric. It was about this time th began taking notes."

The result is the diary of the litical campaign to save W conah from the wrecker's and to bring to Pittsfield a loc owned team that could not be mo to another city when the owners f bigger subsidies in other pastures. are no doubt familiar," Bouton w "with America's most costly hol crisis, perpetuated by the owner professional sports teams: 'Build new stadium,' they warn, 'or you'll er see your team again.'" As an native, Bouton and his faithful "100% private funds to restore and prove a public ballpark to house a locally owned professional base team." All this, says Bouton, "cost to the taxpayers. We'd ever stock to local investors so no one ever move the team out of town a public meeting on the subject, h plores: "Wahconah Park should working museum . . . the Museu Minor League Memories."

Ignoring friendly advice tha political establishment "has 'touched' on this new stadium is Bouton teams up with Chip El an engaging local investment ba and Eric Margenau, who owns s al teams. Together, they draft pl save Wahconah Park and to pur a minor-league franchise. Bouto Elitzer file petitions, write letter pear on radio, and testify befor city council and the Parks Com sion. But no one around city h among those pushing for a new um is listening to their request was like trying to have a convers with animated robots at D World," Bouton reports. Among is Pittsfield's mayor, Gerald S. Do who exhibits "a combination of lar-guy affability and unjustly ac fury, creating the overall impre of a pugnacious maitre d'."

One of the mayor's friends *Berkshire Eagle*. The paper is p MediaNews Group of Denver,

ıvested $250,000 in a promotion
ɔany, Berkshire Sports & Events,
ɔnvince local voters that it is in
interest to spend $18.5 million,
ly from the public trough, for a
minor-league park. When Bou-
speaks to the *Eagle*'s publisher
t saving Wahconah Park, he is
"The guy you have to convince is
oss in Denver."

Why such fixation on a new stadium? One tantalizing possibility is that the loca- selected, that owned by the *Berk- Eagle*, was part of an old junkyard e in the 1940s and '50s, General ric and others may have dumped e contaminants, including PCBs. › having a field of dreams instead waste site would save local inter- millions in cleanup costs: build it the Environmental Protection ıcy will stay away.*

ɔr the Bouton and Elitzer plan to ., they need to get a thirty-year for Wahconah from the city, with condition that they will purchase ıchise from one of several minor- ıe teams playing in New England. y pledge to invest $250,000 in ıconah upgrades prior to opening 2002, and they unveil plans to ıtain the stadium's turn-of-the- ury charm with improvements as a Taste of the Berkshires food t and what they call Not-So- ıry Boxes. Omitted from the plans some of the minor-league pro- ons that Bouton saw in his play- days, such as "Bladder Buster ıt," when the beer is free until eone goes to the rest room, or ing for Dollars," when fans scram- or $1,000 in single bills scattered nd the stadium.

ɔuton, Elitzer, and their many sup- ɛrs lobby to have an open forum to ıte the merits of the proposals for ıconah and, later, to have the tion included on the November ballot. When Bouton asks a Parks official, "whatever happened to the public hearings you said they were going to have?" he is told: "I spoke to Cliff [Nilan, head of the Parks Commission], and he said, 'I don't want to have to talk to everybody and defend what we're doing. Everybody's just going to have to live with it.'"

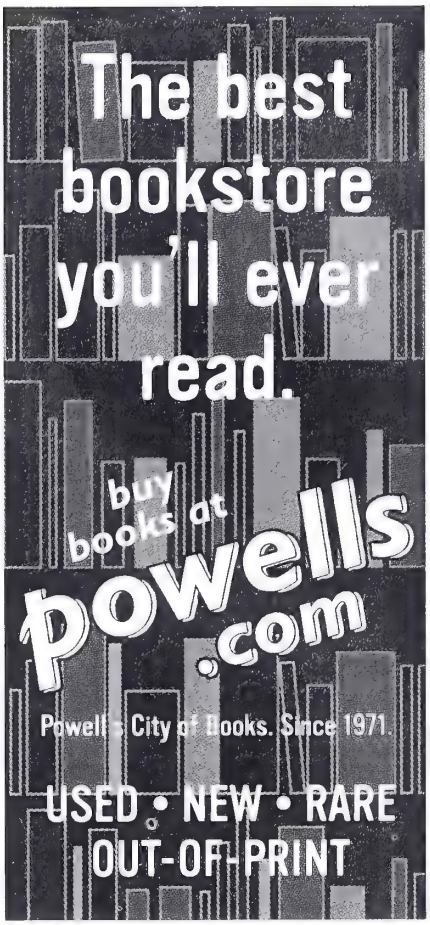
The city council votes against putting the question of Wahconah's lease on the November ballot, a move that prompts one local politician to tell Bouton, "The council meeting last week was really about the abdication of democracy, not the ballpark." Bouton reflects: "This is democracy in action, advise and consent, Pittsfield style: The power structure *advises* the council what it wants to see happen, and asks them to play ball or else. Once the council *consents*, which can take all of fifteen minutes, the matter goes to the lower chamber—DelGallo's or The Brewery—for enactment by people like the mayor or the commissioners."

About the same time as the Parks Commission vote the *Berkshire Eagle* criticizes Bouton and Elitzer for their "continued divisive mentality," prompting one of Bouton's few piques of anger in a frustrating political battle:

> The mayor says "the fix is in." The City Council president says he's getting "an unbelievable amount of shit" from new-stadium councilors "and others." A mayoral candidate says state officials told him "the city was lying about not having to put up money." A state senator says he "knows" decisions are being made at a bar. And the Parks chairman is going around telling people we're "out" before the Commission has voted.
>
> And Chip and I are somehow responsible for "this continued divisive mentality"?
>
> Well, too bad. "Everybody's just going to have to live with it."

Instead of granting the Bouton group a thirty-year lease for independent, locally owned baseball in Wahconah, the mayor and his pals on the Parks Commission give the field to Jonathan Fleisig, then owner of the Massachusetts Mad Dogs, despite his lack of a comprehensive plan. Watching Fleisig's presentation to the Parks Commission, Bouton writes, is "hard to describe, although the word 'rambling' would be a good place to start." But Fleisig "is just

*ring their campaign Bouton and Elitzer old what everyone knows about Pitts- "This city is marinating in PCBs." In l it reached a settlement with General ric to clean up some of the sites. Critics e settlement, which was negotiated by ɔr Doyle, among others, said that Pitts- should have gotten double the amount nd the cleanup.*




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a piss ballpark." [illegible] As of this writing, [illegible] team, now called the Berkshire Black Bears, team [illegible] Pittsfield, not having found sufficient subsidies to keep baseball in Wahconah.

Whatever the [illegible] in Pittsfield in the years ahead, 139 minor-league baseball stadiums have been built since 1985 with taxpayer dollars. Bouton observes: "The amount of public money spent on sport stadiums over the past fifteen years is estimated to be in excess of $16 billion. And that's just what's visible." In most cases stadiums are built to attract a team from another city or to keep an existing franchise on location, but other threads link these projects, which all play the game of "hide the subsidy."

According to Bouton, those who favor new stadiums tend to be local oligarchs: the law firms, the banks, the politicians, the contractors. Invariably, if there is a door-to-door campaign, it is to oppose a new stadium, the proposals for which rarely make it onto any ballot. The consensus is that a public vote on the issue would go against new building. No matter what team owners say about putting up new-stadium money, nearly all the finance for these ballparks comes from public sources, although the shell game of land swaps, zero-coupon bonds, state grants, match funding, and the like usually makes it difficult to trace the flow of funds.

In Bouton's view, local newspapers nearly always support new stadiums, because, like the *Berkshire Eagle*, they are part of vertically integrated "media" conglomerates that have side bets in real estate, cable television, radio, and sports. (For example, the *New York Times*, which publishes the *Boston Globe*, owns 15 percent of the Boston Red Sox, who were recently discussing a new Fenway Park.) In most cases neither the team owner nor the league puts up much new-stadium money. But Bouton believes the ultimate reason that so many stadiums get built with other people's money is because the opposition gets "worn down" while the sentimental support of a local team touches a cord of civic pride, under which the costs are buried. Only in San Francisco, thanks to a loyal opposition, were private funds raised for a new ballpark.

A great many of these conditions were present in New York when former mayor Rudolph Giuliani put forward plans to build new stadiums for both the Yankees and the Mets, at an estimated cost of $1.6 billion. At the time, post–September 11 New York had a budget deficit of $4 billion, and Giuliani had already given both Messrs. Steinbrenner and Wilpon, the respective owners of the Yankees and the Mets, the gifts of more than $100 million toward minor-league stadiums, one in Brooklyn and the other on Staten Island. When someone had the temerity to ask the mayor why a vote had not been held on the proposed major-league ballparks, Giuliani responded, "Because they would have voted it down."

Nor does Bouton believe that new-stadium economics trickles wealth into pockets other than team owners'. Once the construction is completed, those employed around baseball fields, other than the players, tend to earn minimum wage selling hot dogs and beer, cutting grass, and parking cars—not exactly the stuff on which economic revivals are made. "The only people, besides team owners, who want new stadiums are politicians, lawyers, and the media," Bouton concludes. "Politicos like to swagger around a palace—and stadiums are the modern palaces—the bigger the better, especially for mayors suffering from stadium envy. They like to watch games from the owner's box in full view of the TV cameras and hang out in the clubhouse with the players. This is in addition to the usual perks, graft, kickbacks, and patronage that accrue to politicians on big construction projects."

Seen through Bouton's eyes, baseball appears as a feudal guild, a restricted trade manipulated so that a few appointed nobles maintain their designated fiefs. Of the office of the commissioner, he writes: "Since he is hired and paid by the owners and not the players or the fans, he should more accurately be described as the Person in Charge of Protecting the Financial Interests of the Twenty-Six Business Gr[illegible] Which Make Profits from Baseb[illegible]

The current commissioner, [illegible] Selig, was the owner of the Mil[illegible] kee Brewers, which he created [illegible] buying the franchise of the bank[rupt] Seattle Pilots. He maintains the [illegible] on Pete Rose for financial indi[scre]tions, but when Selig had to dive[st] ownership in the Brewers, he put t[he] in a blind trust, albeit one overse[en] his daughter. He also presided ove[r] condemning of the Montreal E[xpos] who were purchased by the ow[ner] guild at a distressed price and wh[o] now entertaining offers to move [to] new city, provided the package inc[ludes] a new stadium. When Selig an[d] other owners turned down the p[os]bility of the city of San Diego ow[ning] the Padres, they also made it clear [that] would not tolerate a community-o[wned] team in the major leagues. Wh[at] you blackmail if the fans own the t[eam]

Although *Foul Ball* is mainly a [book] about minor-league politics, both [on] and in the updated edition of *Ball*[*Foul Ball*] one can glimpse Bouton's attitu[de] ward the modern game itself. H[e] plores the way baseball thrives on [the] ries of ugly confrontations—bet[ween] players and owners, between one [team] and another. "Baseball has beco[me] cheaper game, designed for unk[now]ing fans accustomed to gross a[nd] over subtle beauty." He remembe[rs] respect once accorded players on [the] ing teams, not to mention mode[st] achievement. At times he finds ba[ll] "cartoonish." When he started [go]ing, he writes, "A homer was j[ust] homer—not a religious experien[ce]

Nor are the minor leagues thri[ving] despite all the new ballparks. W[hen] Bouton signed with the Yanke[es] 1959, they had eleven minor-le[ague] teams, and he played in a syste[m] moved him from Auburn, New [York] to Amarillo, Texas. Now the Ya[nkees] have only six minor-league affil[iates] since the major leagues rely mo[re] college baseball to stock the p[ro]sional pond. Modern players co[me] the game more prepared for the [major] leagues and have had the bene[fit] well-funded programs. But co[llege] baseball has made the game, in [Bou]ton's view, "more corporate."

*Continued on p[age]*

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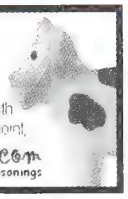
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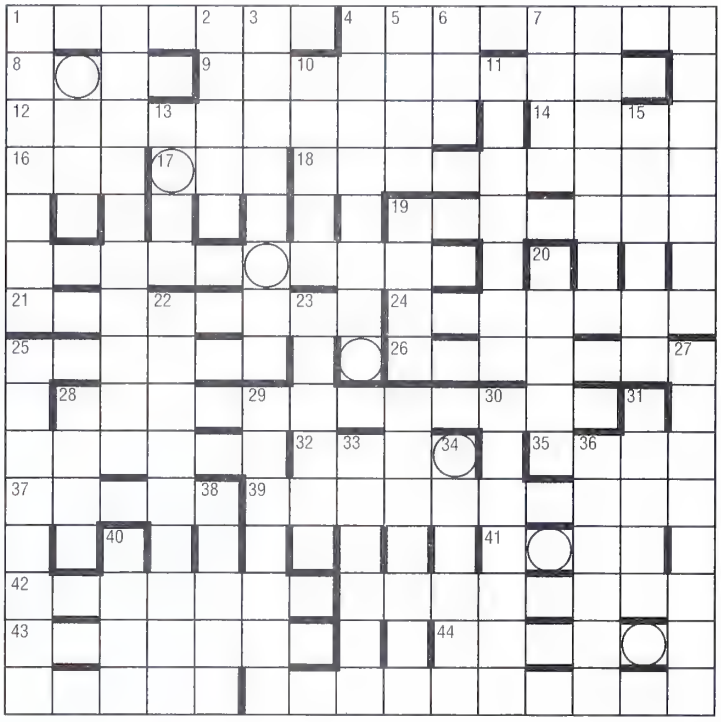
Continued from page 96

game of rival corporations, base[ball] loses some of the character that it [had] from sandlot America. Gone are [the] days when a scouting report consi[sted] of the advice to "smoke 'em inside. [In] the times when Bouton was told [the] word on Tim McCarver of the C[ards] was that Sandy Koufax struck him [out] on letter-high fastballs." (As Bo[uton] later reflected: "Which is great ad[vice] if you can throw letter-high fast[balls] like Koufax could.")

When *Ball Four* was published [in] 1970, I purchased the hardb[ack] edition for $6.95, a lot of mone[y] a high school sophomore to sp[end] on a book. That summer [I] throughout high school I rea[d] endlessly, flipping back and f[orth] across the diary entries. I wish I [had] spent as much time with Sh[ake]speare or Henry James as I did [with] the Seattle Pilots. But *Ball Four* [is] the perfect coming-of-age acc[ount] for anyone who grew up betw[een] the salad days of the Yankee[s] nasty and the fog of Vietnam [and] Watergate. In the same vein, [*Foul*] *Ball* reconciles baseball's consti[tut]ed nostalgia—as expressed in P[ark]more's Camden Yards or the s[ame] optricon of Ken Burns—with [which] Howard Cosell called "the [last] business of carpet-bagging."

Another pleasure of *Foul Ball* [is] the updated *Ball Four* is to catch [up] with Jim Bouton after thirty [years] and not find him, as is the case [with] former Yankee Fritz Peterson, [now] fling cards in a casino. At one [point] his wife complains he's spending [too] much time trying to save a run-[down] stadium. "It's such a long shot,' [she] says. "My whole life is a long s[hot]," he tells her. Now Bouton has m[oved] from challenging hitters to bu[ilding] one inside on a cozy political e[sta]blishment. He does it with lang[uage] that lays bare the extent to w[hich] town democracy is played on a [field] of schemes. But in using baseb[all] to write an important book about [local] politics, Bouton does credit to [the] original editor of *Ball Four*, Le[onard] Shecter, who observed before he [died] that "a guy could make a living [by] telling the truth."

# PUZZLE



## Cross-Words

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

Thirteen entries, which have something in common, are unclued. The common element is to be found in the circled spaces reading from left to right.

Five clued answers are proper names. Entries at 26A and 15D are somewhat uncommon. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 77.

ACROSS

1. Enemy tilling the soil (7)
8. Be the next thing to a conjunction (4)
9. Foul play with amorous old letters (10)
12. Started over around the first of the week, it's recalled (10)
14. Alabama creationist's content to make plot (4)
16. Dull writing either way! (3)
17. Eve before tribal apparition? (3)
18. Philosopher's sad secret disseminated (9)
19. Olympian's act is to stick out outside (7)
21. Sat back with rage on an island (8)
24. Fluid measure for fabric, one gathered (7)
25. Pipes and rods—right one needs to be installed (6)
26. Bassoons long ago got stuck between two notes (7)
32. Wide-eyed before now: "Gee" (4)
35. The Democrat loses heart—Not this! (4)
37. Here's a word for dieters: train (5)
39. Participants in setting off were rivals (10)
41. Hit with stones, and hide (4)
42. Drab life improved, holding back a kind of chaos (7)
43. Doctor, prudent, has favorable inclination (7)
44. Running back so involved in greater effort makes down (6)

DOWN

1. Hat's off for retired person—is artist with a lot of pluck! (7)
2. Achieve total integration (partially) in 2009 (5)
3. Babies' leather when the last is moved higher (8)
4. Old warning system hammered into colander (8)
5. Poetry shows oddness, oddly (4)
6. Drop off new December packages, love (3)
7. Something heard above row R? (4)
10. Seldom short, is able to make deposits in some banks (5)
11. You can't pass him up—go, or had gone off (4,3)
13. Naturally, bears range across Asia (4)
15. Surgeons do this secret workup (6)
20. Ring tossed in . . . ring tossed in . . . : give up? (5)
22. Required conservative support for male prosecutor (9)
23. At home, Virginia gets fashionable fruitlessly (2,4)
25. Make wild blue-bottle fly mad—Listen, initially, it's all you can take (8)
27. Born to bury first prisoner of war (8)
28. Noose strung up for pot (4)
29. Type appealing to court following (7)
30. A famous 1 Down not off the hook (7)
31. Do what's quietly pretentious (5)
33. Bottle top in case of Gallo distributed worldwide (6)
34. Touch of eyeliner added to dwarf one's unique makeup (6)
36. After entry, nothing tops a Yoo Hoo (6)
38. Extreme characters ran outside, bummed (5)
40. Dog blown away when Reagan left Toronto? (4)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Cross-Words," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by April 12. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the June issue. Winners of the February puzzle, "Forced Entry," are Richard Elbirt, Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Gordon Mason, Fredericton, Nebraska; and Paul Schierenbeck, Cambridge, Massachusetts.



# FINDINGS

South Korean scientists created 30 human clone embryos and harvested embryonic stem cells from one of them; the stem cells were then injected into mice, where they formed cartilage, muscle, bone, and other tissues. The research received wide praise from experts in the field, but it was noted that the techniques used for such therapeutic cloning will now be available for human reproduction. Scientists in Texas recently cloned a white-tailed deer. Israeli researchers successfully used DNA to create a functional self-assembling electronic nanodevice. Scientists in New York created a new kind of mouse by moving mitochondrial DNA from one species into another, and fat rats lost weight after they were given a gene-therapy shot that changed fat cells into a previously unknown kind of fat-burning cell. Researchers in Atlanta, Georgia, found that overweight men tend to produce sperm with fragmented DNA, which results in low fertility and more frequent miscarriages. Coffee makes sperm swim faster, according to a recent Brazilian study, whereas men who smoke a lot of marijuana have fewer sperm, which tend to swim "too fast too early." The British Medical Association reported that smoking cigarettes increases the risk of impotence, infertility, cervical cancer, miscarriage, stillbirth, sudden infant death syndrome, low birth weight, placental complications, and cleft palate.

Researchers in California succeeded in teaching genetically engineered *E. coli* bacteria to communicate using a new chemical "language"; the research aims at turning cells into tiny robots. Japanese roboticists created a belly-dancing robot and a walking robot chair; researchers at Carnegie Mellon University modified Segway scooters to create robots that can play soccer. Physicists in Russia created two new superheavy elements, tentatively called Ununtrium and Ununpentium. Astronomers discovered that a black hole has been continuously emitting an extremely low B-flat note for about 2.5 billion years; they said it was the lowest note ever detected. The bombardier beetle, which can fire liquid at its enemies from its rear end at up to 500 squirts per second, was being scrutinized in the hope of building a better airplane engine. A study found that teens would like to hear more about sex from their parents, and the *Journal of Marriage and Family* reported that most American parents yell at their kids. It was discovered that fetuses are more likely to hear vowel sounds than consonants. Australian physicists revealed that the high notes sung by opera singers are often hard to understand.

Researchers from the University of Chicago reported not long ago that male Guinea baboons fiddle with one another's genitals when they perform a complex greeting ritual; the fiddling follows face pulling and rump presentation. White-faced capuchin monkeys, in contrast, stick their fingers up one another's noses. British researchers have identified overly tight neckties as a possible contributor to glaucoma. Marine biologists traced a strange submarine farting sound to bubbles that were observed coming from a herring's anus; it was the first discovery of a fish making a sound, which has been labeled a "fast repetitive tick," or FRT, with its anus. Male whales, dolphins, and seals have been turning into hermaphrodites because of pollution, and European scientists concluded that beer does not cause beer bellies. Tanzania banned the importation of used underwear. Marriage makes women happier, according to new research, but men feel better while living in sin. In Thailand, a Buddhist abbot reportedly cured a woman using a magic wooden penis. An American gun manufacturer developed a pistol that can shoot around corners. British scientists found that men cause more pain than women. ■

*white blind (bright red) (2-12), archival pigment photographs by Uta Barth*
*Courtesy of the artist, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York City, and ACME, Los Angeles.*
*Her work will be on display this spring at SITE Santa Fe, in New Mexico.*

ew from the National Book Award-winning author of *Slaves in the Family*

# PENINSULA of LIES

## A True Story of Mysterious Birth and Taboo Love

## EDWARD BALL

***Peninsula of Lies* is the remarkable story of Dawn Langley Simmons, who shocked Charleston, South Carolina, with one of the most unusual sexual scandals of our time.**

The year before she died in eptember 2000, Dawn Langley immons, a person I'd never met but new from her infamous reputation, ent me a letter. I was living in harleston, South Carolina, Dawn's dopted hometown, an old city where he'd settled after sampling its atmosphere of forgotten manners and antique uildings. Dawn explained that she was lover of antiques, and some years earer she'd bought a piece of eighteenthentury furniture previously in the ands of my family. "I once owned the all commode chair, which was hippendale in style," she said. answered the letter with a friendly ote but didn't promise to locate he commode.

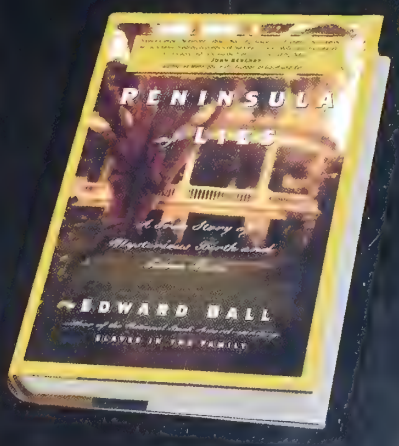
When I had more time, I'd get back h touch. Too many months passed, owever, and Dawn Simmons died. When I heard the news, I reproached nyself for letting the chance pass to neet one of the most unusual people ver to put down roots in the South, a egion with a flair for the bizarre. Even mong the South's strong crop of veird personalities, Dawn's life had been exceptional, the kind of thing with which people marked the passage of time, like a hurricane or a war—as in, "Charleston was such a dignified place until Dawn came to town."

Dawn Simmons, the sexual enigma, had led a lopsided life. She was celebrated in her first incarnation, that of an author of biographies, who happened to be male. Later, she made it known she/he was a transgender person whose identity fell somewhere between the sexual poles, a revelation that led to her ostracism. She faced her punishment with a smile, like an actress catching trash thrown by the audience. In the end, however, she found a kind of vindication and surprised even her detractors.

With all this, I wondered whether there was another reason she'd written. Had she really just wanted to talk toilets or did she mean her letter to convey some message in code? I recognized too late that perhaps what she'd wanted was a listener, someone who might pay careful and not mocking attention to her fascinating and unlikely story."—from *Peninsula of Lies*

**"Dawn Langley Simmons—stoic, charming, and utterly bizarre—was one of the great, taboo-trashing eccentrics of our time. Edward Ball carefully unravels the mystery and explains the fantasy in fascinating detail."**

—JOHN BERENDT, author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*




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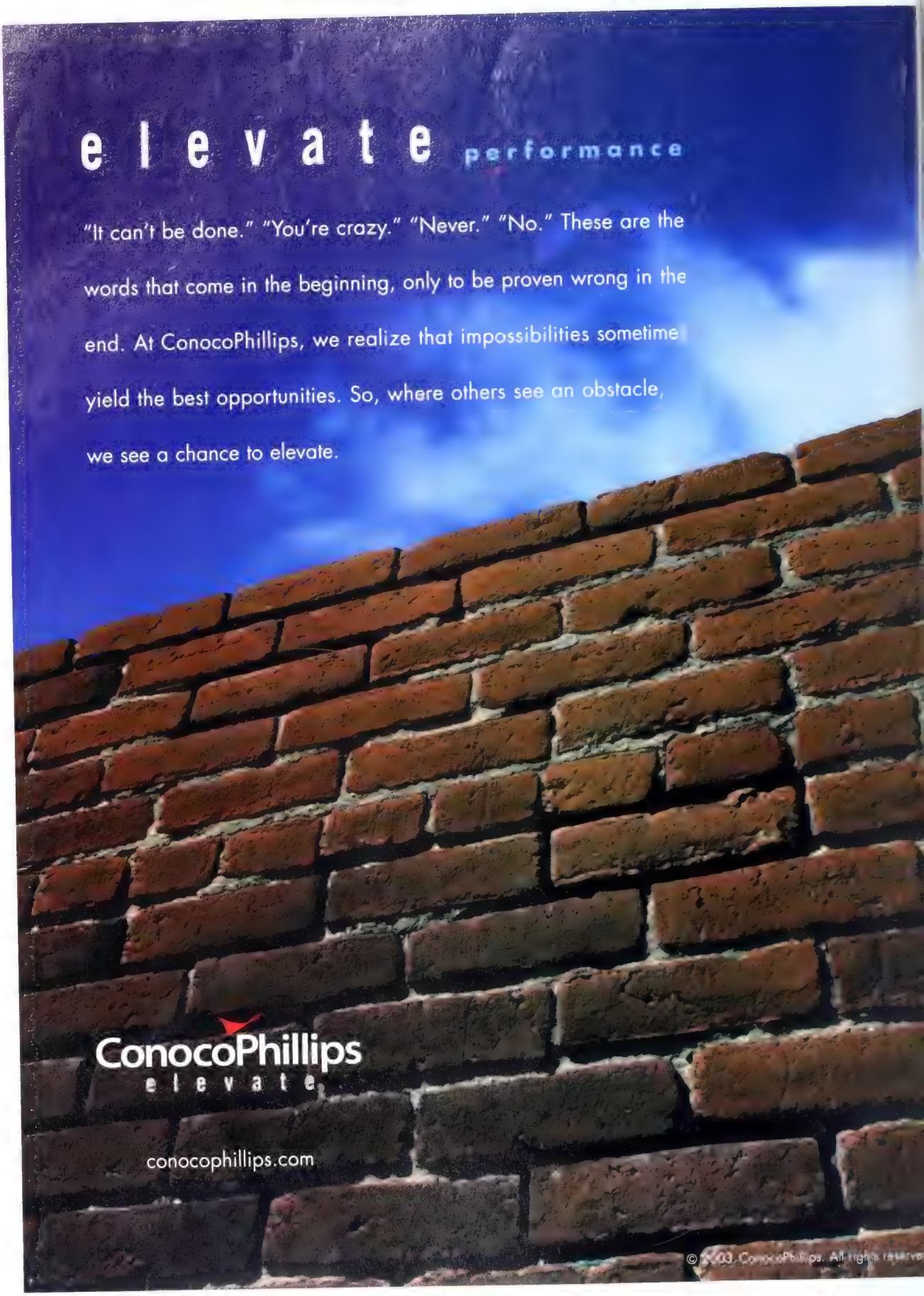
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# LETTERS

## Simulacra and Stimulation

Francine Prose writes that reality television is "a parody of democracy, robbed of its heart and soul, a democracy in which everyone always votes, literally, for himself" ["Voting Democracy Off the Island," Criticism, March]. But if public endorsement of governmental policy has been selfish, the result of this support has been self-destructive.

The general population has supported extreme tax cuts for the affluent, putting the prosperity of average Americans and their children at profound risk; Medicare reform leaves seniors footing more of their medical bills than ever; and Social Security reform, which has the capacity to implode the system it is intended to bolster, is sold to Americans as a way to advance their lot in life. Perhaps Americans are paying reality television and other programs too much mind to notice the rug being pulled from beneath their feet.

If, like our reality-television counterparts, we are caught up in voting for ourselves, we desperately need to ensure that the policies we support are designed at least to meet our self-interest halfway.

*Keith Peters*
Costa Mesa, Calif.

Contrary to Francine Prose's evaluation, NBC's *Average Joe* does not push the message that "physical attractiveness is all"; it exposes, rather effectively, the insane hypocrisy of a society that instructs its constituen to bleat and to believe ridiculou platitudes, such as "it's what's insi that counts," while acting on a set diametrically opposed values. Ar one episode of CBS's *Survivor* w prompt even the most obdurate O jectivist to shrink from Ayn Ran dogma that capitalism promot peace and goodwill toward men. R ality television does not promote t values of what Prose so tritely ca the "Republican corporatocracy"— undermines them.

*Milosz Meller*
Chicago

Francine Prose's attitude—th television producers have outwitt the average obtuse viewer— shared by many high-minded int lectuals. This may be true to a d gree, but there are viewers who re ognize the macro-social implicatio of television's most vile tendenci and yet can turn on the tube wit out smug righteousness or dr severity. They can even manage hearty laugh or two.

*Jimmy Chen*
Starkville, Miss.

Although I agree with Franci Prose's assertion that reality tele sion is warped and advantageous the Bush Administration, I do n believe the cash prize is the prima motivation for the contestants their viewers. Far more alluring the chance for notoriety.

Reality shows have done their ta show predecessors one better. Co testants have the opportunity to sho case not only the particularity personal experience but also the p ticularity of the self—its spli second responses, reactions, desir

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

d fears. Reality television markets aggressive form of individualism it is becoming both increasingly nec- ary and desirable in the abstracted iversalism of our global age.

*sica Lott*
ston

Francine Prose's analysis of the owing phenomenon of reality TV ngs to mind the Super Bowl half- ne show's "garment failure" inci- nt. The bankrupt moral fibre and tered ethics of popular American lture is an equal, if not greater, eat than the elusive weapons of ss destruction.

*ward Collister*
uebec City, Canada

Francine Prose argues that reality evision is desensitizing the public the excesses of a manipulative mmercial and political establish- nt, but mass advertising has had even greater adverse effect on the blic's ability to distinguish be- een true and false. To be effective, vertising must persuade consumers at one product or service is superi- to others of equal value, and, in st cases, this involves deception. ven that we are confronted on a ily basis by this socially accepted ocess rooted in falsehood, it is rdly surprising that 69 percent of e U.S. public believes that Sad- m Hussein was somehow responsi- for September 11.

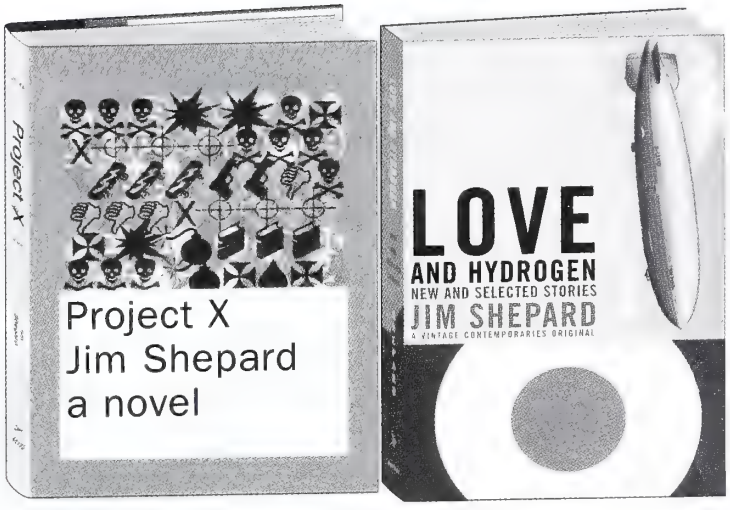
*m F. Kerridge*
l Mar, Calif.

### rum's Fatwa

Lewis Lapham ["Dar al-Harb," otebook, March] casts doubt on e credibility of *An End to Evil* gely because of its authors' Repub- an affiliations, even though recent ents have borne out Richard Perle d David Frum's thesis regarding e threat of Islamic terror to the nited States and the world. Citing ecific countries and well-docu- nted facts, the authors have pre- cted that the next worldwide war ll be fought between radical Islam- fundamentalism and the West.


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—ALAN CHEUSE, NPR



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Since the 1948 war to exterminate Israel, Western values have been subject to attack not only from the Islamic world but from terrorist groups throughout Europe. Lapham fails to confront the extent of evil arising from Islamic fundamentalism, unlike David Armstrong, who, in the same issue [Country Houses," Briefings, March], lays [illegible] the global terrorist problem at the doorstep of the fundamentalist Saudi Arabian regime.

*Nelson Mazor*
Silver Spring, Md.

Lewis Lapham might have mentioned that *An End to Evil* author David Frum is Canadian. His late mother, Barbara Frum, was for many years a broadcasting icon on the CBC, and was regarded as a voice of Canadian liberalism.

*Anders L. Ourom*
Vancouver, Canada

## Fear Factor

In the process of dismissing the "dirty bomb" threat as one more example of the fear-mongering promulgated by Bush and Ashcroft, Luke Mitchell ["A Run on Terror," Briefings, March] describes "dirty bombs" as being part of Jose Padilla's "fantasies" when they are more likely a component of John Ashcroft's. Despite the fanfare two years ago when Ashcroft announced Padilla's arrest and the allegations against him, and even though Padilla has been held in a state of extrajudicial incarceration since, not one shred of evidence has been presented to substantiate the government's claim that he engaged in criminal plans or actions of any kind.

The silence of elected officials, the media, and the public in the face of this travesty of justice is another facet of the Bush Administration's manipulative "war on terror."

*Yoram Gat*
Palo Alto, Calif.

Luke Mitchell writes that "one of the remarkable things about September 11 is that there was no follow-up," and that this might be indicative of "a lack of wherewithal on the part of would-be terrorists." But Mitchell fails to acknowledge *why* there have not been more terrorist attacks: They are unnecessary. The terrorists won.

After September 11, the United States became markedly more aggressive worldwide, doing wonders for Al Qaeda's recruiting efforts. The United States subsequently became unrealistically paranoid, vaporizing many of the qualities on which we pride ourselves and weakening our ability to project democratic values on the world.

Al Qaeda managed to take the pretty gloves off some of the uglier aspects of U.S. behavior while weakening and perverting some of the finer aspects of our country. Not bad for a single day's work. Why bother to attack again?

*John Greer*
Olympia, Wash.

Luke Mitchell insists that fears of attack from chemical or biological weapons are overblown and cites Aum Shinrikyo as an example, noting that the group was unable to kill more than sixteen people when it released sarin in the Tokyo subway in 1995. Mitchell fails to mention that more than 5,000 people were injured in the attack, and that a survey of the victims by Japan's National Police Agency five years later found that more than half of the 1,000 respondents were still suffering from physical, not to mention psychological, effects of the gas.

Mitchell later characterizes a nuclear attack against the United States as "a horror not unlike many this nation has faced before and many that this nation will face again," and evidently tolerable in his eyes because it "would not destroy America. It would not even come close."

If these are the best arguments the left can come up with against Ashcroft and the Bush Administration's assault on constitutional rights, we can expect four more years of the same. People's fears, regardless of what Mitchell might think of them, are real and powerful and ought to be engaged more thoughtfully by both parties.

*Glenn Gale*
Tokyo

## Cuba *Libro*

"The Little Engine That Dialectically Must" [Readings, February] presented several heavy-handed paragraphs from textbooks used during the 1961 Cuban literacy campaign. Both the title of the excerpted lessons and the introduction, however, convey the false impression that these texts were intended for children.

The Cuban literacy campaign was directed at illiterate adults, mostly peasants, during the first years of the Cuban Revolution. For better or worse, the Cuban government never denied that it was a political as well as a pedagogical effort.

*Sheyla Hirshon*
Portland, Ore.

## Fiscal Fiasco

Lewis Lapham alludes to the "federal debt" as having risen to $52[illegible] billion in 2004 ["The Fog of Self," Notebook, April]. The United States would be in great shape if this were indeed true.

Unfortunately, it was the deficit that rose to $521 billion. The U.S. debt is currently at a little more than $7.1 trillion.

*Garth Rogers*
San Mateo, Calif.

## Beyond Bush

David Samuels's "A Fistful of Peanuts" [Letter from Houston, March] is proof that journalists need only to attend, and truthfully describe, a political event to reveal the absolutely insane state in which "democracy" currently finds itself.

Samuels's fresh attention to the Bush $2,000-a-plate fund-raising event, and not just the politician, stands in stark opposition to the media's stale spin on our political process.

*Franklin L. Runge*
Brookline, Mass.

## gainst the Green?

Richard Manning's math is mis-
ading at the end of his otherwise
formative article ["The Oil We
at," Essay, February]. He scolds
gh-minded vegetarians for "wiping
it 99 percent of wildlife's habitat,
farming has done in Iowa," and
en he writes that "eighty percent
the grain the United States pro-
ices goes to livestock." Surely
uch of that first figure is taken up
the second.

It is meat and dairy eaters who are
iping out the bulk of wildlife habi-
t, and Manning should give green
ters their due: for those of us who
nnot regularly go out and bag wild
k, vegetarian habits are kinder.

*ubrey Nealon*
ancouver, Canada

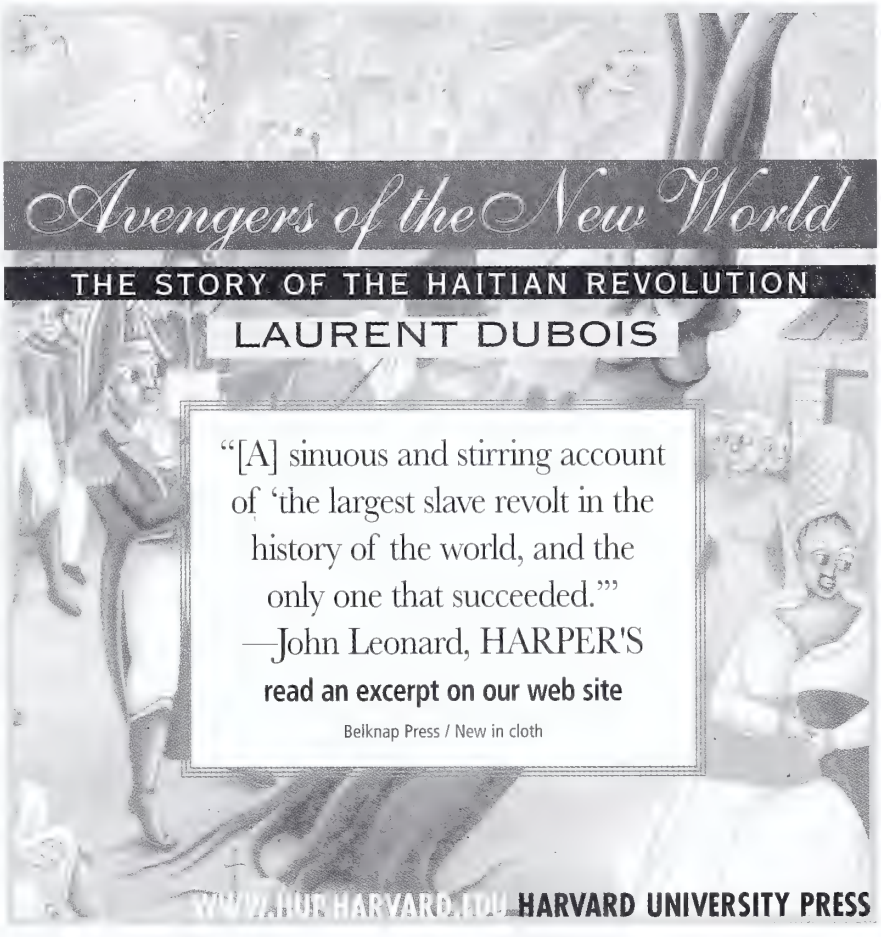
*chard Manning responds:*

Math is often not nearly as mis-
ading as are the unspoken assump-
ons behind it.

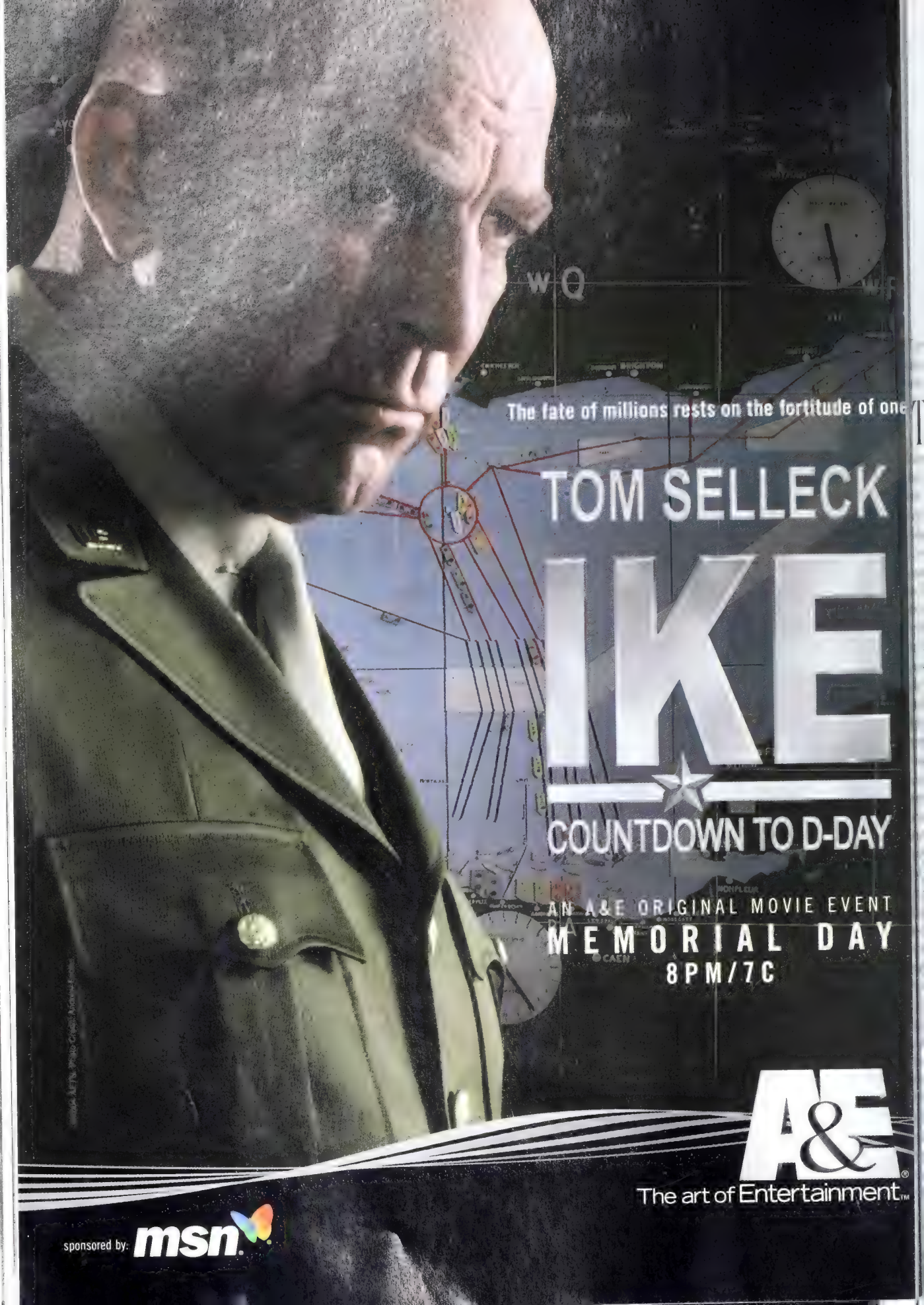
It is true that most of our grain
eds livestock, so vegetarianism
eatly reduces the demand for
ain. That is one alternative to the
atus quo. Another is grass-fed beef,
mb, and wild game. The latter has
e advantages of meeting nutri-
onal needs humans have evolved
r a full complement of amino acids
d providing an economic incen-
ve to convert grain fields to envi-
nmentally sustainable grasslands.
his is not to say the latter is
eferable. In a complex system of
verse tastes and values, both can
d will obtain. And both are
eferable to the status quo, at least
nergetically and environmentally.
he question of which is "kinder" is
aught with assumptions.

## Correction

In 2000, Democrat Gavin New-
m, now mayor of San Francisco,
ade a $500 donation not to the
ush-Cheney campaign [Index,
larch] but to the Republican Party
f San Francisco, which distributed
mpaign materials endorsing him
r supervisor and Bush for president.
/e regret the error.





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# NOTEBOOK

## Buffalo dances

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*There is no national science just as there is no national multiplication table; what is national is no longer science.*

—Anton Chekhov

The reasons not to reelect President George W. Bush probably number in the thousands, but I know of few as obvious as the one put forward in a little-noticed report published last February by the Union of Concerned Scientists under the unassuming title "Scientific Integrity in Policymaking." Although signed by sixty of the country's most accomplished scientists, among them twenty Nobel laureates honored for their work in as many disciplines (molecular biology, chemistry, superconductivity, zoology, experimental particle physics, oceanography, etc.), the report didn't attract the attention of news media preoccupied with the comings and goings of the winter primary campaigns. What the scientists had to say gathered meaning not from new or sensational allegations but from the collective witness of numerous individuals subjected to various forms of censorship when called upon to provide scientific data in matters of government policy. Invited to testify before a federal agency or a congressional committee on topics as diverse as climate change, military intelligence, and the Missouri River, they found most of the questions already answered in compliance with the Bush Administration's prepaid and prerecorded political agenda. Time and again in the thirty-eight-page report the respondents mention the stone-faced displays of willed ignorance, and their plain statements of fact add to the sum of an indictment more telling than Senator John Kerry's best efforts at emotional diatribe and quarrelsome polemic:

> It's hard not to think that our findings don't match up with what they want to hear, they are putting a new team on the job who will give them what they want.
>
> . . . restrictions on what government scientists can say or write about "sensitive" topics.
>
> . . . well-established pattern of suppression and distortion of scientific findings . . .
>
> No fewer than twelve paragraphs lifted, sometimes verbatim, from a legal document prepared by industry lawyers.
>
> Information suggesting a link between abortion and breast cancer was posted on the National Cancer Institute website despite objections from CDC staff.

The report speaks to the presence of something new under the American sun. Not the art of shading the statistics to accommodate a specific commercial or political interest—a familiar practice, as well established as the hiring of competitive teams of experts—but the systematic substitution of ideological certainty for reasonable doubt across the entire spectrum of issues bearing on the public health and welfare. In years past the testimony often and predictably brought forth sharp differences of interpretation of almost any fact that anybody cared to name, whether in regard to the life span of a bacteria or the trajectory of a cruise missile, but nearly everybody in the room could be relied upon to employ the instruments of logic and deductive reasoning and at least to acknowledge more or less the same rules of evidence.

The Bush Administration apparently has declared the expectation inoperative, and with it the principle on which the country is founded. The American democracy depends for its existence on the force of reason and the uses of experiment, and if I read correctly the report from the Union of Concerned Scientists, the signatories find fault with the Republican college of augurs in Washington not for a single error (or even a multiple choice of errors) but for its rejection of the scientific method in favor of the conviction that if the science doesn't prove what it's been told to prove, then the science has been tampered with by Satan or the Democratic Party.

The disdain for disloyal or unpatriotic fact defines the Bush Administration's approach not only to questions likely to embarrass the oil, weapons, and insurance industries but also to those that might interfere with its fanciful conceptions of war and money. The invasion of Iraq went forward with the blessing of counterfeit evidence (about the weapons of mass destruction and Saddam Hussein's alliance with Al Qaeda), as did the passage of the Medicare prescription drug bill (the known cost of $500 billion reduced to a more convenient $400 billion); Christine Todd Whitman resigned her cabinet appointment to the Environmental Protection Agency because she couldn't stomach the White House's instructions to deny the ill effects of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; General Eric Shinseki, the Army's chief of staff, retired after telling Congress that the number of American troops required to occupy

Iraq would come closer to "several hundred thousand" than to the 100,000 confidently uttered by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; Paul O'Neill was dismissed as the secretary of the treasury because he refused to say that money grows on trees. To read the stories of the papers is to remember that in Nazi Germany, Einstein's theory of relativity was condemned as a Jewish corruption of Isaac Newton's "organic" laws of nature, and that in Stalinist Russia, biologists were tortured and then executed for failing to admit that the science of genetics was a "reactionary" and "bourgeois" lie.

The Union of Concerned Scientists concludes its report with the expression of a hope that the government's divorce from reality is a curable disease subject to congressional diagnosis and legislative remedy. I wish I could share the supposition. Although I can appreciate the scale of the collective alarm, I think it late in arriving and wrongly placed. The reality to which the signatories refer went out of fashion some years ago, and it is they, not the Bush Administration, who find themselves at odds with the forms of magical thinking that now constitute the society's surest proofs of wisdom. Why else does America declare a war on terrorism that resembles a geopolitical video game adapted from the script of *Lord of the Rings*? How is it possible to elect Arnold Schwarzenegger governor of California except in the belief that he will bring to Sacramento the secret stone of power that Conan the Barbarian rescued from the sorceress in the castle of Shan?

The postmodern sensibility is a product of the electronic media, which lend themselves more readily to the traffic in dreams and incantations than to the distributions of coherent argument. As the habits of mind beholden to the rule of images come to replace the systems of thought derived from the meaning of words, the constant viewer learns to eliminate the association of cause with effect. Within the walls of silicon and glass that enclose the artificial kingdom known to the late Marshall McLuhan as "the pool of Narcissus," the time is always now—if not on channels 1 through 524 in New York or Los Angeles, then somewhere among the blogs floating in the sea of cyberspace, if not on *Oprah* or the *Drudge Report*, then at votenader.org or at the award-winning adult site www.whitehouse.com. In the enchanted garden of the eternal present John F. Kennedy is still the king in Camelot and Jane Austen is forever riding in a carriage on the road to Bath. Weightless and without consequence, the images drifting across the mirrors of the self appear and disappear in no context other than their own, demanding nothing of the audience except the duty of ritual observance. Because the camera sees but cannot think, it doesn't matter who sings the undying songs of love, or whether the twenty-four-hour circus parade goes nowhere except around in circles. Nothing necessarily follows from anything else; what is important is the surge and volume of emotion, not its object or its subject, and the accelerated data streams of the virtual future carry the friends of Rush Limbaugh backward into the firelight flickering in the caves of the pagan and prehistoric past. Narrative dissolves into montage and knowledge becomes a matter of instantly recognizing the iconography (Osama's beard, the Nike swoosh, Ralph Lauren's polo player, Howard Dean's upraised fist); history reverts to myth, and politics collapse into the staging of pageants sometimes accompanied by a fall of brightly colored balloons.

Similar in character to the reality television shows constructed along the lines of *Survivor* and *The Apprentice*, the election campaigns borrow their heroics from the medieval chroniclers who told of Christian knights sent in search of dragons, required to recover bits and pieces of the true cross and to wander for many days and nights in a wilderness of elves. In the early years of the twenty-first century, in a country that boasts of its prowess with laser beams, the man who would be president must endure the trials by klieg light and wander for many days and nights in a labyrinth of Holiday Inns, fending off the banquet food and hurling press releases at the other candidate from Yale, answering, in twenty words or less, questions that can't be answered in four or twenty thousand. The presidency undoubtedly constitutes a fearful test of a man's capacities, but his capacities for what? Even if the electorate understood or cared about the tedious business of government, how does it choose between the rivals for its fealty and esteem? The one attribute that can be known and seen comes to stand for all the other attributes that remain invisible, and so the test becomes one of finding out who can survive the stupidity and pitiless indifference of the television cameras.

Of our presidents we make celebrities—a safer form of constitutional divinity than the one embodied in the name of Caesar—and with gifts of adulation and applause the media appoint them to the office of totem pole. To say that Mr. Bush is an incompetent president is like saying that Tom Cruise can't act or that Britney Spears can't sing. The observation might be true, but it ignores the point that celebrity is a commodity meant to be sold at the supermarket checkout counter with the cosmetics and the canned soup. What was once a subject has become an object, no longer capable of error or human speech, imparting a sense of stability and calm to a world in which the science or the military intelligence refuses to prove what it has been told to prove. The headlines bring word of death in Iraq and terrorism in Spain, famine in Somalia and banditry in Washington, but on the smooth and reassuring surface of a magazine cover or movie screen the golden masks of divine celebrity—George W. and Nicole, Jude and the Donald—bestow upon the faithful the smiles of infinite bliss.

The magical forms of thinking inhabit so many different quarters of the society that it's hard to read the morning paper, much less watch the evening news broadcasts, without coming across another instance of the broad retreat into the forest of superstition. President Bush goes

fore a crowd of factory workers in
ıio, many of them recently unem-
›yed, and while posed in front of
bright, blue banner announcing
e miracle of JOBS AND GROWTH,
says, with a boyish and cheerful
in, that he intends to tear down
e nation's remaining trade barri-
; and make permanent the tax cut
r the very rich. The attending
ess corps doesn't comment on ei-
er the witlessness or the inappro-
iateness of the remark because it
recognized as the casting of a sa-
ed spell. All present understand
at Mr. Bush might as well be wav-
g Pharaoh's wand or performing
e Arapaho buffalo dance. Among
ople who worship the objects of
eir own invention, whether in
e form of a satellite phone or as
e chrome-plated image of a presi-
nt, ritual becomes a form of ap-
ed knowledge.

Thus the House of Representatives
ıen it considers legislation desig-
ting cheeseburgers as enemies of the
ıte, or Michael R. Bloomberg, the
ıyor of New York, when he issues
edict requiring every third-grade
ıdent in the city's public-school sys-
n to pass a standardized test (engi-
ered by academic soothsayers and
ued by a computer) before being al-
wed to advance to the fourth grade.
doesn't matter that the test provides
accurate measure of the child's in-
ligence and no fair assessment of
e child's needs or circumstances. The
t looks for a sign from Heaven, the
esumption similar to that of a
elfth-century Catholic bishop seek-
g to discover a sinner's guilt or in-
ıcence by forcing him to walk on
t coals. The season's most success-
movie ($295 million at the box of-
e in the first four weeks of its re-
ıse) is Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the*
*rist*, which devotes 100 of its 126
nutes to the bloody slaughter of a
rificial animal that would have glad-
ned the mob in the Roman Colos-
ım, and Martha Stewart suffers the
›urging of a criminal trial for having
failed in her duties as a
vestal virgin.

Although I don't doubt that a
ciety in which fewer and fewer
ople know how to think is proba-
bly easier to manage than one in
which too many people ask too
many questions for which they don't
already know the answers, the flight
into the self-referential landscapes of
wish and dream doesn't hold out
much promise for the American fu-
ture. It speaks instead to the exhaus-
tion of the spirit and intent that
framed the Constitution.

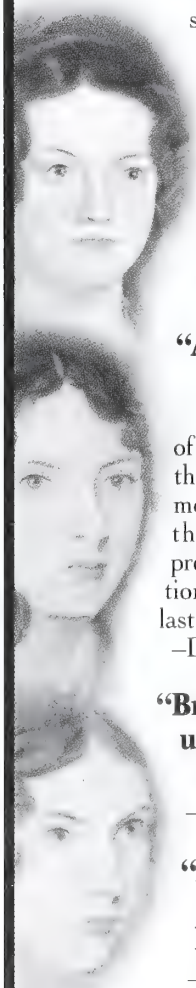
The inventors of the country's lib-
erties recognized themselves as scien-
tists, makers of maps and collectors of
beetles, who pursued their studies in
as many spheres of reference as could
be crowded into a Philadelphia li-
brary company or a Boston philo-
sophical society. Together with Ben-
jamin Franklin they delighted in the
joys of discovery and understood the
American democracy as an ongoing
experiment with the volatile sub-
stance of freedom.

Both of this year's presidential
candidates acknowledge the coun-
try's recent loss of 3 million manu-
facturing jobs, but neither of them
mentions the more serious wound,
which is the depletion of the nation-
al reserves of political intelligence.
To the extent that we take comfort
in the illusion that the future can be
bought instead of earned, we join
Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld in the
magical explanation for the non-ex-
istence of hideous weapons in Iraq
("The absence of evidence is not ev-
idence of absence") or Attorney
General John Ashcroft in the belief
that in America "there is no king
but Jesus."

The phrase "national security" un-
doubtedly will make numerous ap-
pearances in the campaign speeches
between now and the November
election, and if the ritual holds true
to form it will add to the country's
inventories of fear instead of increas-
ing its store of courage. To define the
national security as a wonder of air-
craft carriers or a marvel of surveil-
lance cameras is to mistake the lesser
for the greater instruments of Ameri-
can power, to miss the point, made
by the signatories to both the Con-
stitution and the report from the
Union of Concerned Scientists, that
the republic's best and only chance
for survival rests on its freedom of
thought and force of mind. ■


# THE BRONTË MYTH

**"Lucasta Miller's absorbing new book,"**
**says Michiko Kakutani in *The New York Times*,**
"attempts 'to trace the historical route' by which the Brontës became popular cultural figures ...Miller writes with such lucidity, wit, and plain common sense that she is able to shed new light on the Brontës and the Brontë industry."



***The N.Y. Times Book Review*** **calls it,**
**"A wonderfully entertaining account**
of the ways in which the Brontës' 'lonely moorland lives' lent themselves to the process of mythification even before the last sister had died."
–Daphne Merkin

**"Brilliant, riveting, unputdownable and erudite"**
*–Daily Mail,* UK

**"A witty deconstruction of Brontëmania"**
*–Guardian,* UK

**"Original and witty**
...Literary history is seldom related with such a pleasant combination of brio and erudition."
*–Sunday Times,* UK

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Painting: The Brontë Sisters by Patrick Branwell Brontë

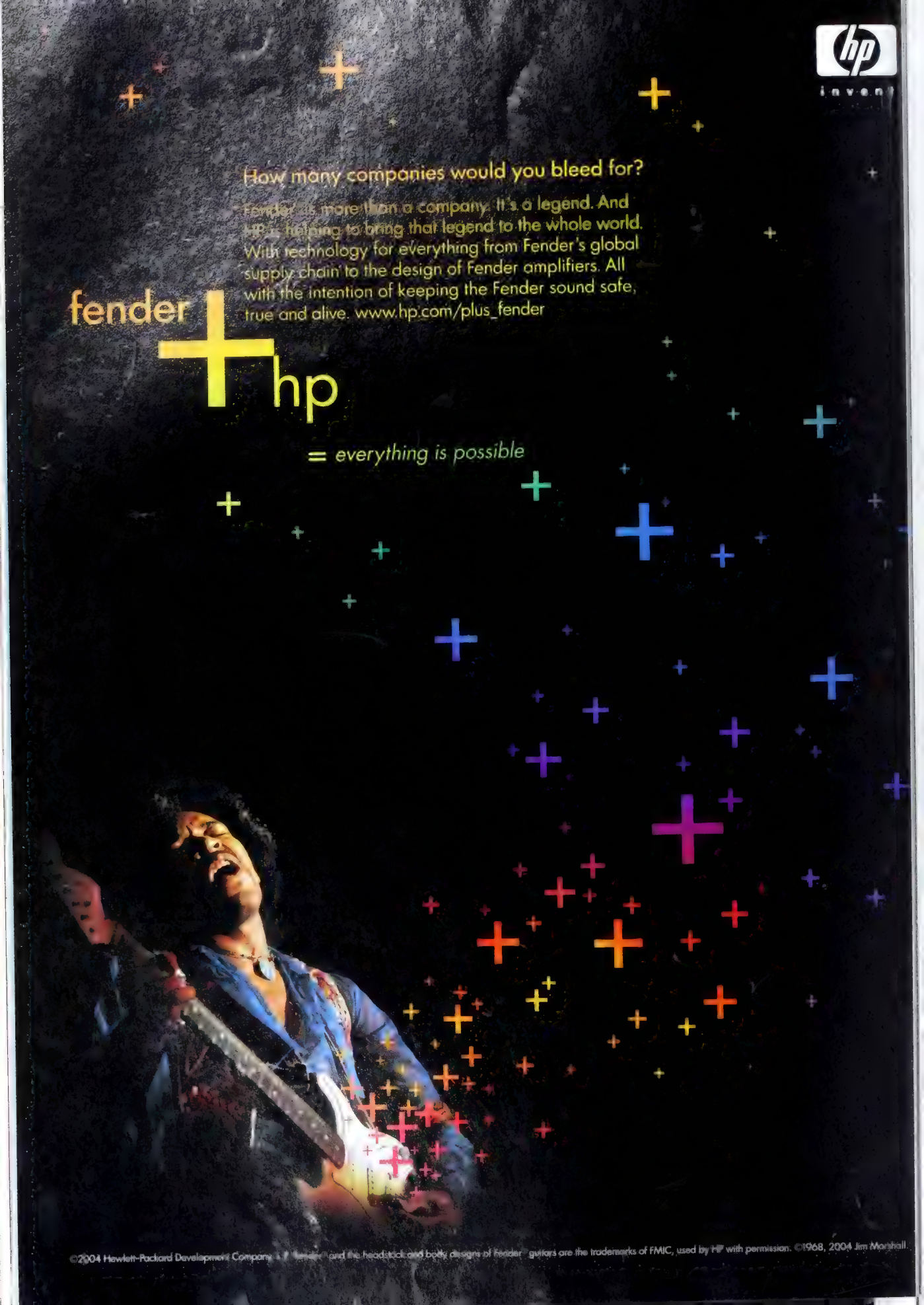



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# HARPER'S INDEX

Chance that an American adult believes that "politics and government are too complicated to understand" : 1 in 3
Chance that an American who was home-schooled feels this way : 1 in 25
umber of blank votes recorded by touchscreen machines in a January election for Florida's House of Representatives : 137
Votes by which the race was won : 12
Number of Haiti's elections since 1994 called "bogus electoral exercises" by the State Department's Roger Noriega : 3
Last year in which one of these elections took place under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide : 1995
ercentage of Western Hemisphere countries besides Cuba whose leaders Noriega believes have been "freely elected" : 100
Federal funds given last September to a group organizing the recall of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez : $53,400
linimum number of misleading statements on Iraq made by the Bush Administration's top officials since March 2002 : 237
Percentage of these that contradicted, made selective use of, or mischaracterized existing government intelligence : 100
Days before last year's invasion of Iraq that Osama bin Laden called Saddam Hussein a "socialist infidel" : 36
)ays into the 1999 NATO bombing of Kosovo that candidate George W. Bush observed, "Victory means exit strategy" : 17
Months into the war in Iraq that all U.S. personnel there were equipped with antiballistic body armor : 11 (see page 67)
Months into the war that Britain confirmed that all its troops were outfitted with desert clothing : 9
Estimated percentage of French schoolgirls who wore an Islamic head scarf to school last fall : 0.02
Number of Holsteins disqualified from the Ohio State Fair last August because they were wearing a hair piece : 2
Number of suspensions a Dallas-area high school handed out last fall for dress-code violations : 1,116
Acreage of a Christian nudist colony under development in Florida : 240
inimum number of Italian men accused of paying for a "sexual anxieties" diagnosis to avoid military service last winter : 150
Number of times that Everglades saw grass switches gender during a week of flowering : 2
Percentage of the 958 same-sex unions granted to Vermont residents since July 2000 that have since been dissolved : 3
Percentage of U.S. heterosexual marriages that are dissolved within five years : 20
Median household income a pair of U.S. single mothers would have if they married each other : $40,568
Median household income of a U.S. heterosexual couple with children : $59,461
Percentage of senior management positions in medium-size Russian companies that are held by women : 42
Percentage of senior management positions at equivalent U.S. companies that are : 20
Percentage of U.S. companies that threaten to close the work site when faced with a unionization effort : 51
Factor by which the unemployment rate of African-American college graduates exceeds that of white graduates : 1.9
Average percentage of African-American men age 16 to 64 in New York City who were employed each month last year : 52
Minimum number of Tennesseans who have ordered new license plates bearing the Confederate flag : 3,000
Minimum revenue the Sons of Confederate Veterans stands to collect through such sales : $20,000
Amount the federal Individual Indian Trust cannot account for, per Native American it serves : $26,000
)tal overruns at Boston's "Big Dig" attributed to mistakes and mismanagement by the Bechtel Corporation : $1,100,000,000
Percentage of the 13,129 varieties of dirt in the United States that are endangered : 4
Amount that Tom DeLay's political action committee spent at the Washington, D.C., Hooters last November : $117.19
'ears in prison to which two ex-Pentagon officials were sentenced last year for taking bribes of money and prostitutes : 24
Number of years a North Carolina man has been in prison for stealing a television : 33
ays after Smith & Wesson Holding appointed a chairman last winter that he resigned over old armed-robbery convictions : 38
Caliber of his first gun, a Smith & Wesson used for armed robbery : .38

*Figures cited are the latest available as of March 2004. Sources are listed on page 77.*
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# READINGS

[Essay]

## ACTS OF RESISTANCE

*By Elaine Scarry, from "Resolving to Resist," which appeared in the February/March issue of the* Boston Review. *Scarry is the author, most recently, of* On Beauty and Being Just.

When the U.S.A. Patriot Act arrived in our midst in the fall of 2001, its very title seemed to deliver an injury: "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism." One might have thought that "United States of America" would be a sufficient referent for the letters "U.S.A." and that no one would presume to bestow a new meaning on the word "patriot," with its heavy freight of history (Paul Revere, Patrick Henry, Emma Lazarus) and its always fresh aspiration ("O beautiful for patriot dream").

In the two and a half years since it was passed, the U.S.A. Patriot Act has become the locus of resistance against the unceasing injuries of the Bush-Rumsfeld-Ashcroft triumvirate, as first one community, then two, then eleven, then twenty-seven, and now 272 have passed resolutions against it, as have four state legislatures. The letters "U.S.A." and the word "patriot" are gradually reacquiring their earlier solidity and sufficiency as local and state governments reanimate the practice of self-rule by opposing the Patriot Act's assault on the personal privacy, free flow of information, and freedom of association that lie at the heart of democracy. Each of the resolutions affirms the town's obligation to uphold the constitutional rights of all persons who live there, and many of them explicitly direct police and other residents to refrain from carrying out the provisions of the Act, even when instructed to do so by a federal officer.

When the resistance was first beginning, in the winter of 2001–2002, it took five months for the first five resolutions to come into being; by the winter of 2003–2004, a new resolution was being drafted almost every day. The resolutions come from towns ranging from small villages—Wendell, Massachusetts (986), Riverside, Washington (348), Gaston, Oregon (620)—to huge cities—Philadelphia (1,517,550), Baltimore (651,000), Chicago (2,896,000), Detroit (951,000), Austin (656,300), San Francisco (777,000). Approximately a third of the resolutions come from towns and cities with populations between 20,000 and 200,000.

The fact that the Patriot Act has engendered such resistance may at first seem puzzling. True, its legislative history is sordid: it was rushed through Congress in several days; no hearings were held; it went largely unread; only a few of its many egregious provisions were modified. But at least it *was* passed by Congress: many other blows to civil liberties have been delivered as unmodified executive edicts, such as the formation of military tribunals and the nullification of attorney-client privilege. True, the Patriot Act severed words from their meanings (beginning with the letters "U.S.A."), but executive statements associating Iraq with nuclear weapons and with Al Qaeda severed words from

[Harper's]

# NEGATIVE CAPABILITY

*The following assertions were collected from public statements made by George W. Bush and his official spokesmen since 1999.*

The President of the United States is not a fact checker.
I'm not a statistician.
I'm not a number-cruncher.
I'm not one of those bean counters.
I'm not very analytical.
I'm not a process guy.
The President is not a micromanager.
I'm not a member of the legislative branch.
The President is not a rubber stamp for the Congress.
I'm not a process guy.
I'm not a lawyer.
I'm not a detail guy.
The President is not an economist.
I'm not a stockbroker or a stock picker.
I'm not a forecaster.
I'm not a predictor.
I'm not a pollster, a poll reader guy.
I'm not a very good prognosticator of elections.
I'm not a committee chairman.
I'm not of the Washington scene.
I'm not a lonely person.
I'm not a poet.
I'm not a very good novelist.
I'm not a textbook player.
I'm not an executive.
I'm not a very long-winded person.
I'm not a very formal guy.
I am not a reverential person.
I'm not an Impressionist.
I'm not a divider.
I am not a unilateralist.
I'm not a risk-averse kind of guy.



Rosa-Luxemburg-Strasse, *by Britta Lumer. An exhibition of her work took place last winter at Galerie Griedervonputtkamer, in Berlin.*

of people are made involuntarily transparent by provisions that increase the ability of federal officers to enter and search a person's house, to survey private medical records, business records, library records, and educational records, and to monitor telephone, email, and Internet use. The Fourth Amendment states: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, *but upon probable cause*, supported by Oath or affirmation, and *particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized*" (emphasis added). The Patriot Act both explicitly lowers the "probable cause" requirement, thereby diminishing judicial review, and eliminates the specificity clause—"particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized"—which, like "probable cause," puts severe restraints on the scope and duration of the search. The Act is a sweeping license to search and seize, everywhere and anywhere, guided not by court-validated standards of evidence but by Justice Department hunches and racially inflected intuitions.

As necessary to democracy as the nontransparency of persons is the transparency of government actions, and indeed the Constitution pauses again and again to insist upon open records: "Each house [of Congress] shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same" with "the Yeas and Nays of the Members ... entered on the Journal"; "a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time"; presidential objections to a piece of legislation must be forwarded to the house in which the legislation originated and published in its journal; the counting of the Electoral College votes must take place in the presence of the full Congress; treason proceedings will take place in "open Court" and criminal prosecutions in a "public trial," etc.

The obligation of each branch to make its actions public—to make them visible both to the people and to the other branches—is often construed as a right belonging to the populace, the right of "freedom of information." Indeed, it is hard to disagree with the argument that democratic deliberation is impossible without this access to information. Secrecy, the legal theorist Cass Sunstein writes, "is inconsistent with the principle of self-rule." He identifies citizen deliberation as the primary benefit of open government, but there are other benefits, including checks and balances (one branch cannot check the other if it does not know what the other is doing), and "sunlight as a disinfectant" (if deliberations are carried out in secret, "participants may be less careful to ensure that their behavior is unaffected by illegitimate or irrelevant considerations").

Because both the privacy of individual action and the publication of government action are necessary to democratic self-rule, the major complaint of the local resolutions has been the damage done to the liberties of persons and to the integrity of our laws. The most forceful formulation of this worry comes at the conclusion of the Blount County, Tennessee, resolution, which calls upon all residents "to study the Bill of Rights so that they can recognize and resist attempts to undermine our Constitutional Republic . . . and declare null and void all future attempts to establish Martial Law, [or] Declared States of Emergency." Although most of the other resolutions are more measured in their language, they consistently register the view that both the people and the laws of this country are endangered.

The resolutions have a second, closely related focus. Although the Patriot Act enables the federal government to detain and investigate both citizens and non-citizens, and to carry out surveillance of both citizens and non-citizens, its blows fall most heavily on those who are not U.S. citizens.

Consider section 412. As summarized by the city of Ann Arbor, Michigan, it permits the incarceration of non-citizens for seven days without charge and "for six month periods indefinitely, without access to counsel" if the attorney general "determines release would endanger the security of the country or of a specific person." Before it was modified by Congress, the bill authorized the unlimited detention of immigrants, but the revision is less of an improvement than it seems, since various loopholes release the executive branch from the seven-day constraint.

The resolutions collectively work to prevent this imperilment of all residents of the United States. Almost without exception, the 272 resolutions celebrate their commitment to law and liberty for all "persons" or "residents," not only "citizens." This is expressed in part as a matter of constitutional conviction: The very first clause of the very first resolution (Ann Arbor) begins by echoing the 2001 Supreme Court decision *Zadvydas* v. *Davis*: "The due process and equal protection clauses of the 5th and 14th Amendments to the United States Constitution guarantee certain due process and equal protection rights to all residents of the United States regardless of citizenship or immigration status . . ." Other resolutions remind all residents that discrimination based on "citizenship status" is no more permissible than discrimination based on race or gender. They complain that the Patriot Act tries "to drive a wedge" between citizens and non-citizens, or between police and foreign nationals, a situation held to be intolerable because the town depends on the diversity of its population for its "vitality" and its "economy, culture, and civic character."

Almost the only time when "citizens" are singled out is when the documents place on them the burden of acting to ensure that all "persons" or "residents" enjoy the benefits of due process, protection from unwarranted search and seizure, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and privacy. If, in other words, citizens are unique, it is because they are the guardians of rights belonging to citizens and non-citizens alike, not the exclusive holders of those rights.

[Instructions]

## CAMERA OBSCURA

*From guidelines issued by the publisher Steck-Vaughn to photographers providing images for their educational materials.*

People should "look normal."
Ethnic groups should be portrayed as attractive people.
Asians should not be depicted as shorter than non-Asians.
Contemporary, neat, clean, pressed clothing should be worn, but not their *best* clothes.
All women should wear bras. No noticeable bulges below the waist on men.
People should wear socks with pants or jeans. No bare feet.
No drugs, cigarettes, pipes, cigars, or tobacco of any kind; no liquor, visible or in pockets.
No *excessive* long hair on men. No big hair on women. No trendy haircuts; i.e., shaved heads, carved names or initials, high-top fades, dreadlocks, etc.
No visible tattoos, scars, broken teeth, moles, disfigurements. However, a person with crutches or in a wheelchair is allowed.
No hand-holding or other public displays of affection.
No one should sit with his or her legs spread apart.
No gum chewing.
Not too trendy lifestyles; i.e., normal houses, dog and cat, etc.
No churches, adult theaters/bookstores, bars, liquor stores, etc., showing in background.
Meals should be healthful.
Dogs and cats should not be on furniture.

In addition to aiming blows at our legal framework of self-governance, the Patriot Act licenses the executive branch to harm other institutions—among them, financial markets and universities—and once again its blows appear to be structural.

Take, for example, the provisions that require bankers, broker-dealers, and trading advisers to file "suspicious activity reports" (SARs) when they notice their clients carrying out unusual transfers greater than $5,000. Failure to file is punishable by criminal and civil charges, with fines reaching $10,000. Furthermore, they are prohibited from telling their client about the SAR, which not only taints the client relationship but eliminates at the outset the possibility of determining whether the transfer has some sensible explanation that, if they only knew it, would convince them that the filing was preposterous.

Universities, too, are among the institutions the Patriot Act seeks to change, and the situation may be swiftly assessed by looking at the most widely discussed aspect of the Act, section 215, which applies to both college and public libraries (and, in many cases, bookstores). When approached by an FBI or CIA agent, librarians must turn over a record of the books a specified patron has taken out, and, like the bankers, they are prohibited from telling anyone of the intelligence gathering in which they have just participated.

In his fall 2003 tour of thirty cities to defend the Patriot Act, Attorney General John Ashcroft dismissed the idea that the Justice Department could conceivably care about librarians or library records. A University of Illinois study found, however, that by February 2002 (four months after the Patriot Act was passed) 4 percent of all U.S. libraries and 11 percent of libraries in communities of more than 50,000 people had already been visited by FBI agents requesting information about their patrons' reading habits. Ashcroft insisted that not-yet-released FBI records would demonstrate the indifference of the Justice Department to the libraries, but the Justice Department has in fact refused to release these very same records, despite Freedom of Information Act petitions filed by the American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations.

In distilled form, the logic of the Patriot Act and its defense involves four steps: Maximize the power of the Justice Department; erase the public record of Justice Department actions; respond with indignation if anyone protests that the Justice Department might actually be using its newly expanded powers; point out that the protesters are speaking without any hard evidence or facts without mentioning that the executive branch has withheld those very facts from the public.

[Scenario]

# WE'RE HERE, WE'RE PEERS

*From a speech given in the British House of Lords on February 3 by Earl Ferrers, a former minister for the Conservative Party, during a debate on the Gender Recognition Bill, which contains a paragraph specifically concerning peers who have a sex change.*

I would like some explanations to some serious points, and I hope the Minister will answer them. What happens if an earl has a sex change? In order to make certain that there is no duplicity, we will call him Earl Dodger and his son Viscount Chump. If Earl Dodger has a sex change, does he become a countess, in which case there will then be two Countess Dodgers? Or does he remain as an earl although he masquerades as a woman?

As the earl has changed from being a male to a female, what happens to the title? Does Viscount Chump suddenly inherit the earldom and become an earl, as the earldom is apparently vacant? What happens if Countess Dodger, on the other hand, changes sex and becomes a man? Does she become Earl Dodger, so that there are two earls? She cannot, because she was not appointed. What does she do?

Let us suppose that Earl Dodger has a son and a daughter. Let us suppose that the daughter is older and that she has a sex change and becomes a man. Does she then become Viscount Chump instead of her younger brother, who, up till now, was Viscount Chump? If she does become Viscount Chump, does she inherit the title of earl instead of the proper Viscount Chump, and all the cash if there is any? In my experience, earls do not have much cash nowadays, but they used to in the good old days. There may be a trust fund which goes to the holder of the earldom. Does the lady get that and, if so, will she remain friends with her brother?

If it is intended that the land owned by an earl should pass on to the next earl, and if Earl Dodger becomes a woman and vacates the earldom, does he have to pass his land on to Viscount Dodger, who presumably becomes the earl? Of course, he cannot become the earl, because the earl is still alive. It does not seem very fair, and it happens to nobody else in the country. I hate to put it like this, but the Government is discriminating against hereditary Peers. They have always hated hereditary Peers, but I think hereditary Peers are jolly good folk.

From the founders of this country [illegible] "a government of [illegible] not of men," for men are not angels, and power corrupts. Laws that will keep all the citizens happy all the time cannot be passed. Laws that will keep most of the citizens happy most of the time can be passed. The good laws are those that will [illegible] the same person and found [illegible] individual [illegible] Days for [illegible] its eighteenth century "has no right to expect that it will always have wise and humane rulers." That's why it is crucial to pass good laws. And crucial, also, to repeal bad ones.

Despite impediments to resistance, 272 towns, cities, and counties have created a firewall against executive trespass in their communities. The resolutions direct residents to decline to assist the federal government in any act that violates the Constitution: local police should abstain from assisting federal officers in house searches that violate the Fourth Amendment, and librarians should abstain from giving out private library records that violate the First and Fourth Amendments.

Here we have the key to why the Patriot Act—rather than the executive edicts—has become the focus of so much resistance. Since military tribunals do not require the assistance of the population, what we think about the military tribunals is a matter of indifference to the executive. Since the country has a standing army rather than a draft, the war against Iraq was neither ours to assist nor ours to decline to assist. If, without the population's assistance, 5,000 foreign nationals can be detained without [illegible] (only three of whom were ever charged with terrorism-related acts), then the population's disapproval of this detention is like smoke rings in the wind. But since the aspirations encoded in the Patriot Act cannot come about without the help of police, bankers, and librarians, the refusal to assist provides a concrete brake on the actions of the federal government.

Although the Justice Department has tried to portray resistance to the Patriot Act as a liberal complaint, the resisters repeatedly assert that they occupy positions across the political spectrum. And, so far, both Congress and the courts appear to be listening. Various congressmen and senators have initiated bills to nullify or limit specific provisions of the Patriot Act. In July 2003 the House passed an amendment to the 2004 Appropriations Bill that withholds all federal funding from section 213—the provision that allows the Justice Department to search a house without notifying the resident. The courts, too, share the concerns of the local resolutions. In January a federal court in Los Angeles ruled one section of the Patriot Act unconstitutional: the judge objected to the provision making it a crime to provide "expert advice or assistance" to terrorists on the grounds that the phrasing is so vague as to license the Justice Department to interfere with First Amendment speech guarantees. In December two federal courts issued rulings declaring acts of detention carried out by the Bush Administration unlawful on grounds similar to those mentioned in the town resolutions.

Sorting out the legal status of the Patriot Act may take some time. The United States Constitution prohibits acts that the Patriot Act licenses, and, although constitutional provisions take legal precedence over contradictory legislation, for the time being the Act appears to empower the federal government not only to call upon the country's residents for assistance but also to impose criminal and civil penalties on those who fail to assist.

Whether the resistance to the Patriot Act gains momentum or is ultimately derailed, the town resolutions remind us that the power of enforcement lies not just with local police but with all those who reside in cities, towns, villages, isolated byways, and country lanes. Law—whether local, state, federal, or constitutional—is only real if, as Patrick Henry said, the rest of us will put our hands to it, put our hearts to it, stand behind it.

[Initiative]

## ET IN ARCADIA EGO

*The following ballot measure was passed 314 to 152 in November by the voters of Bolinas, California. The measure was introduced by Jane Blethen, also called Dakar, a local woman who frequently dresses in burlap and paints her face with chocolate.*

Vote for Bolinas to be a socially acknowledged nature-loving town because to like to drink the water out of the lakes to like to eat the blueberries to like the bears is not hatred to hotels and motor boats. Dakar. Temporary and way to save life, skunks, and foxes (airplanes to go over the ocean) and to make it beautiful.




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[Accounts]

# OUT OF MIND

*From interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch researchers in Pakistan and Vivian White, a reporter for the BBC, with recently released prisoners of Camp X-Ray, the United States detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In recent months, several U.S. officials have admitted anonymously that investigators use sleep deprivation, a coercive interrogation technique, and that detainees are often forced to spend long periods of time in painful positions. In December 2002, U.S. military doctors ruled the deaths of two Afghans in U.S. custody at Bagram air base homicides. The United States currently is holding about 650 suspects at Guantánamo Bay.*

ASIF KHAN

They put cuffs and tape on my hands, taped my eyes, and taped my ears. They gagged me. They put chains on my legs and chains around my belly. They injected me. I was unconscious. I don't know how they transported me. When I arrived in Cuba they put me on a bed with wheels. We went to a big prison, and there were cages there. They built it like a zoo.

Each container housed forty-eight cages. Everyone was in his own cage. There was room to sit but not enough to pray. My joints were damaged. The light was very bright, and it was on all the time.

We were not allowed to speak to the people in other blocks. If we talked to them, the guards would take our bedding and blankets, and they wouldn't give them back for three days. We would just have our towels to sit on. They interrogated me two or three times a day. The chains were on me all the time. They would put a hood on my face and tape my eyes shut. Then they would take me for two-hour-long interrogations. They didn't let us sleep night or day. They banged the walls with sticks, making lots of noise. The lights they used meant that we could not see. The Americans would make me kneel with my hands above my head. One of them would be standing in front of me, while the other pointed a gun at me. We were made to kneel for two or three hours. If we moved our face to the side they would make us stay for another two hours. If we moved just slightly it would increase to three hours. We would become unconscious.

Two men in cells next to me went crazy. They tried to kill themselves. Everything was taken from the cell except for their underclothes and a shirt so they couldn't try to strangle themselves again.

K.M.

We were arrested by Northern Alliance forces in October 2001. They loaded us onto trucks and brought us to Mazar-e-Sharif, where we were loaded into containers. There were about 450 prisoners in the containers, and because there was no air and it was so hot, about fifty people were dead by the end of the drive. We were imprisoned in Dasht-e-Layli and fed badly; six pieces of bread for seventy people. A month and a half passed like that, and no one even carried out a minor interrogation of us.

Then one day fifteen of us were loaded onto a helicopter. There were no seats, and all the handcuffed prisoners were forced to kneel with our hands behind us and our bodies bent over our legs. It was difficult to remain in that position, and if we fell to the side or moved, the armed men would kick us with their army boots in our backs and kidneys.

When the helicopter landed at Kandahar air base, someone threw me down the stairs. In Kandahar we were not allowed to talk with one another, and if we did we were beaten. If we moved we were beaten. If we fell asleep we were woken up, and if we covered our head with our bedcovers we were beaten. Soon they changed the punishment for talking. They would take all the prisoners out of the tent and make us lie down on the ground for some time. It was cold,

[Clarification]

# BUTCHER OF THE BADLANDS

*The following correction was printed in the November 18 issue of the* Plain Dealer, *a Cleveland daily.*

Because of an editing error, a story on the front page yesterday misattributed a quote from the speaker on an audiotape purportedly of Saddam Hussein as coming from Senate minority leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota. It was the speaker on the tape, not Daschle, who said, "The evil ones now find themselves in crisis, and this is God's will for them." The only solution for Iraq was for "the zealous Iraqi sons, who ran its affairs and brought it out of backwardness . . . to return . . . to run its affairs anew," the speaker on the tape said.



*"Tule Fish," a photograph by Roman Loranc from his most recent book,* Two-Hearted Oak, *published last October by Heyday Books.*

and some of the prisoners were badly affected by the cold. We did not take a bath or shower in Kandahar. Eighteen days after I arrived, I was taken out of the tent and shackled. My hair, beard, and mustache were shaved, my head was covered with a dark bag, and my hands and feet were shackled to my waist with an iron bar. I was loaded onto an airplane by four soldiers. When the airplane landed, they threw me off the plane. My nose started bleeding when I hit the ground.

My cell was about six and a half square feet. We were given two containers, one for drinking water and the second to use as a toilet. We were not allowed to talk, pray, or call for prayer. I saw one man beaten for praying; his throat was pressed against the wall until he fell unconscious, and he was taken to the hospital. They gave us pills that made us feel numb or made us drunk.

I saw one person try to commit suicide by drinking shampoo. A Pakistani wrapped his bedsheets around his neck, but he was rescued by the guards.

S.M.A.

In late October 2001, I was arrested by Northern Alliance forces. We were taken to Kandahar. When we landed, an American Army man kicked me hard in the back and threw me blindfolded down the stairs onto the ground. I was imprisoned in Kandahar for a month and a half. Then one morning I was blindfolded again and put on an airplane. We landed in what I later understood was Cuba. Soldiers came and dragged me to a cell, which was as big as two beds put next to each other. They took off my blindfold and shaved my beard and hair. Once a week I was taken out for a walk, and once a week I would take a shower.

I was interrogated again and again, and they always asked the same questions. I was exhausted and tired of living like that. I started hearing noises and seeing ghosts.

Other countries torture prisoners with electric shocks, but they tortured me with injections. After I received an injection, my eyes would remain fixed upward, and my muscles would get stiff. I would stay like that for a day and sometimes longer, until I was given another injection, which would relax me, and then I could move my eyes and muscles again. Sometimes they would give me pills after the first injection. I saw other prisoners receive injections as well.

I tried to commit suicide three times there. The first time was during Ramadan, a year after my imprisonment. I hung myself with my blanket, which I fastened around my neck from the ceiling bar of my cell. When I regained consciousness I was in a hospital.

They took my blanket, bedcovers, and other

things that they thought I would use to commit suicide.

I tried committing suicide again two months later. The injections were the reason I did it. This time I tore my blankets into thin threads and hung myself again. After I was found and hospitalized, they started injecting me every day.

The third time I tried committing suicide was eighteen days before I was released. I myself saw [illegible] attempt to commit suicide, and I assume one died, because he never showed up again.

I spent a month in something called Container Camp, where people who had broken the rules were sent for punishment. It had a cold environment, and cold air was always blowing. Sometimes I was freezing cold, but we were denied blankets except during the night.

Finally, on May 8, 2003, I was released. I want the U.S. government, who did not apologize [illegible] and to pay at least the cost of my drugs and treatment since my release.

I was arrested at a checkpoint in Pakistan by Pakistani police. In the prison at Peshawar, the Americans interrogated me through translators, asking questions about how I got wounded and where Osama and Mullah Omar were.

I was there less than a month, and then I was taken to Kandahar. Two American soldiers put me on an airplane with no seats, and we were made to kneel with our bodies bent forward over our legs and our hands behind our backs. Military men pulled us from the airplane and put us in a room. There I was beaten by the Americans. They made me lie on a table with my face down while two people held me, one at my neck and the second at my feet. Both pressed me down hard on the table, and two others beat me on my back, my thighs, and my arms with punches and their elbows.

Before we were taken to Guantánamo, they took samples of our beard hair and measured our heights and recorded our voices. Then they shaved my head and beard and mustache and blindfolded me and covered my ears and mouth. They put us on an airplane. When we landed a Pakistani translator explained that we were not allowed to talk, and we were to use buckets instead of a toilet.

We could not pray during the first ten days. Then a series of strikes began. It lasted three months, and finally they allowed us to pray openly and talk with one another. During those three months we had a difficult time. Guards used gas on us. They would throw a bottle of gas and we would feel like we were suffocating. Sometimes they would end up taking unconscious prisoners to the hospital.

The other method that the guards used to make us quiet was injections. Guards would enter the cell with sticks and masks, and two or three of them would hold a prisoner while one of them injected him in any part of his body. Immediately after the injection, the person would faint. Then he was put into isolation. Twice they injected me and took me to the isolation room, a dark room with cold air blowing.

I saw other prisoners who were beaten until blood was running from their heads. Another thing that I saw was many handicapped prisoners in Guantánamo along with dozens of teenage prisoners.

I was there for eighteen months and was taken for interrogation plenty of times. The questions were the same, and there was intimidation during the interrogations. I was threatened with electric shocks if I did not tell the truth.

[Critique]

## BY THE BOOK

*From the ChildCare Actum Project's Entertainment Media Analysis Report on* The Passion of the Christ, *Mel Gibson's recent film. The ChildCare Action Project is a Christian organization whose mission is to "tell you the truth about the content of popular entertainment."*

VIOLENCE/HATE/OFFENSE TO GOD
ear amputation
physical brutality, often
images of children as demons
calling Jesus a fool, repeatedly
attempts of Satan to tempt and control our Lord
lusting after sadistic brutality
mockery of our Lord, repeatedly
crowd-control beatings, repeatedly
crowd lusting after killing Jesus
suicide of Judas
facial injuries from beatings/brutality
brutal, vicious whipping
ripping flesh, repeatedly
intensely graphic full-body gore, frequently
driving thorns into scalp
crowd brutalization of near-dead Jesus
continued beatings/whippings of our already mutilated Lord
kicking our near-dead Lord
murder of our Lord

After eighteen months I was released. There were five prisoners who were handed over to Saudi Arabia for interrogation.

I have told all of my story to you, though I was warned not to do so by the American officer who released me. He told me to hold my tongue and not say anything about what happened in Guantánamo.

Anyhow, I told you most of the things I had not shared with others. In case of running into trouble I expect your help and assistance if there are problems as a result of my interview.

[Grievances]

## A PLACE UNDER THE SUN

*From letters written to President Bush by residents of the Sauerland region of Germany in response to his January 14 announcement of United States plans to build a deep-space launch pad on the moon. The letter writers are among more than 1,200 Germans who purchased moon lots from U.S. entrepreneur Dennis Hope, who claims legal ownership of the moon under a loophole in the 1967 United Nations Outer Space Treaty. No national governments have yet recognized Hope's claim to the real estate, and it is possible that rival companies have sold overlapping lots to different customers. Hope's company offers one-acre lots for $19.99.*

Dear Mr. President George W. Bush,

In our local paper of February 1, 2004, I read an article about the plans of the U.S. government to build a space station on the moon. For me this is more than just an ordinary piece of news, because I am the owner of a part of the moon surface. Nearly four years ago I bought an area of 700,000 square meters on the moon. To prove this I include the document of ownership. Reading about your plans I do worry that the future space station might be built on my lot. So I would like to inform you that I might allow the U.S. government to do so, but only if I am paid for that area. If this should happen, I would be ready to enter into negotiations with the U.S. officials.

Dear Mr. President,

I read about the new plans of the U.S.A. to build a moon station. I am a great fan of outer-space activities, and so I like the idea. But since 1999 I am owner of a small part of the moon surface. I bought it from the Lunar Embassy. Now, I'd like to know where you plan to build the station. If this would be randomly in my area, you will need my permission. This is no problem, but contact me before further plannings, please. If you will use another area, who is the owner of this part of the moon? Please contact me if possible in German.

Dear Mr. President!

I am the proprietor of the moon estate with the following position: Moon estate number 1397, longitude 20–24 degrees east, latitude 6–10 degrees north. These are 700,000 square meters. If you intend to use my area within the bounds of your intention, to build a moon base or something else on, over, or under the surface of this moon area, you have to contact me personally. This must be absolutely, to clear up under which special conditions I will leave the rights of use to you or the United States of America. If you or the United States of America at all will fail to do this, I will take legal action at an American court of justice, to receive a compensation of 10,000,000 EURO.

But I believe that you or the United States of America will be a considerable business partner.

[Evidence]

## WHITE HOUSE EFFECT

*The following email, obtained by Greenpeace last September, was sent on June 3, 2002, to Phil Cooney, chief of staff at the White House Council for Environmental Quality, by Myron Ebell, director of international environmental policy at the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI), a conservative think tank funded by Exxon/Mobil. Six days earlier the White House had submitted a report to the U.N., as required by the 1992 Rio Treaty on Climate Change, which expanded on a 2000 report, the "National Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change," effectively the first acknowledgment of the reality of global warming from the Bush Administration. On June 4, 2002, in an attempt to distance himself from the initial report, President Bush dismissed it as having come from "the bureaucracy," and in August the CEI filed a lawsuit seeking to discredit the report. Since its discovery, Ebell's email has prompted two state attorneys general to demand an investigation into whether administration officials illegally conspired with the*

*CEI to file the lawsuit against the Environmental Protection Agency. Christine Todd Whitman resigned as head of the EPA last May.*

Dear Phil,

Thanks for calling and asking for our help. I know you're in crisis mode, but from our end it is a most welcome change from the administration's mode, which is to tell conservatives to stop bothering them and to shut up. So it's nice to know we're needed once in a while. I want to help you cool things down, but after consulting with the team, I think that what we can do is limited until there is an official statement from the administration repudiating the report to the U.N. and disavowing large parts of it.

As I said, we made the decision this morning to do as much as we could to deflect criticism by blaming EPA for freelancing. It seems to me that the folks at EPA are the obvious fall guys, and we would only hope that the fall guy (or gal) should be as high up as possible. I have done several interviews and have stressed that the President needs to get everyone rowing in the same direction. Perhaps tomorrow we will call for Whitman to be fired. I know that doesn't seem like much help, but it seems to me that our only leverage to push you in the right direction is to drive a wedge between the President and those in the administration who think that they are serving the President's best interests by pushing this rubbish.

The references to the National Assessment in the report are most hurtful to us because we dropped our lawsuit last September 5 after receiving a written assurance that the National Assessment did not represent "policy positions or official statements of the U.S. government."

So I'm willing and ready to help, but it won't be possible to do much without some sort of backtracking from the administration. Unless that occurs, then you have handed an awful lot of ammunition to Jim Jeffords [Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works], and the only way we will be able to fight him and all his allies in the Congress is to get much more strident and noisy. Even if the administration does move quickly to get back on the right side on the issue, it may be too late to save our side in the Senate from being squashed. If it were only this one little disaster we could all lock arms and weather the assault, but this administration has managed, whether through incompetence or intention, to create one disaster after another and then expect its allies to clean up the mess. I don't know whether we have the resources to clean up this one.

Best,
Myron

[Forecast]

# APOCALYPSE NOW

*From an October 2003 Pentagon report entitled "An Abrupt Climate-Change Scenario and Its Implications for United States National Security." In March 2001 the Bush Administration refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, which seeks to limit greenhouse-gas emissions. The United States, Russia, and Australia are currently the only industrialized nations that are not parties to the convention.*

Past examples of abrupt climate-change suggest that it is prudent to consider an abrupt climate-change scenario, especially because there appears to be general agreement in the scientific community that an extreme case like the one cited below is not implausible. Rather than pointing to decades or even centuries of gradual warming, recent evidence suggests the possibility that a more dire climate scenario may actually be unfolding.

Following the most rapid century of warming experienced by modern civilization, the first ten years of the twenty-first century see an acceleration of atmospheric warming, as most of North America, Europe, and parts of South America experience 30 percent more days with peak temperatures over 90 degrees than they did a century ago. In addition to the warming, there are erratic weather patterns: more floods, particularly in mountainous regions, and prolonged droughts in grain-producing and coastal-agriculture areas.

In 2007 a particularly severe storm causes the ocean to break through levees in the Netherlands, making a few key coastal cities such as The Hague uninhabitable. Melting along the Himalayan glaciers accelerates, causing some Tibetan people to relocate. Additionally, millions of people are put at risk of flooding around the globe, and fisheries are disrupted as water-temperature changes cause fish to migrate to new locations and habitats, increasing tensions over fishing rights. As the melting of the Greenland ice sheet exceeds the annual snowfall, the freshening of waters in the North Atlantic Ocean increases. The lower densities of these freshened waters in turn pave the way for a sharp slowing and eventual collapse of the thermohaline circulation system, beginning in 2010, and disrupting the temperate climate of Europe, which is made possible by the warm flows of the Gulf Stream.

Each of the years from 2010 to 2020 sees temperature drops throughout northern Europe. Average annual rainfall in this region

# The American Civil War

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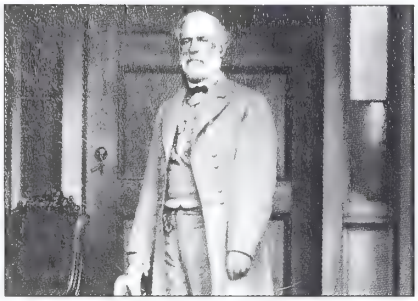
**Gettysburg. Antietam. Bull Run. Shiloh. The Wilderness. Missionary Ridge.** Between 1861 nd 1865, the clash of the greatest armies he Western Hemisphere had ever seen urned these small towns, little-known treams, and obscure corners of American ountryside into names that will never lie.

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General Robert E. Lee.

Extraordinary leaders and incompetent tyrants served on both sides. Their power to fascinate, inspire, or exasperate remains undimmed even today. You will find Professor Gallagher's brief but telling sketches of these figures exceptionally evocative and rewarding. Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee, William Tecumseh Sherman and Stonewall Jackson, and others come to life.

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Professor Gary W. Gallagher is the author of several books and dozens of scholarly articles, most recently, *The Confederate War* (Harvard University Press, 1997). Today, he is one of the leading authorities on the Civil War. He is the John L. Nau III Professor in the History of the American Civil War at the University of Virginia.

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*"Tree Rings, Yosemite National Park, California, 1994," by Jeff Mermelstein, was included in* No Title Here, *a collection of his photographs published by powerHouse Books in August.*

decreases by nearly 50 percent. Lakes dry up, river flow decreases, and the freshwater supply is squeezed. At the same time, areas that were relatively dry over the past few decades receive persistent years of torrential rainfall, flooding rivers. By the second half of this decade, the harsher conditions spread deeper into southern Europe, North America, and beyond. Winds pick up, and cold air blowing across the European continent causes especially harsh conditions for agriculture. The combination of wind and dryness causes widespread dust storms.

By the end of the decade, Europe's climate is more like Siberia's. Europe struggles to stem emigration out of Scandinavian and northern European nations in search of warmth. By 2015 conflict within the EU over food and water supplies lead to skirmishes and strained diplomatic relations; in 2022 a skirmish occurs between France and Germany over commercial access to the Rhine. In 2025 the EU nears collapse.

The United States turns inward, committing its resources to feeding its own population, shoring up its borders, and managing the increasing global tension. The United States and Australia are likely to build defensive fortresses around their countries, because they have the resources and reserves to achieve self-sufficiency. In 2025 internal struggle in Saudi Arabia brings Chinese and U.S. naval forces to the Gulf in indirect confrontation.

China, with its high need for food supply, is hit hard by a decreased reliability of the monsoon rains. Longer, colder winters and hotter summers stress already tight energy and water supplies. Widespread famine causes chaos and internal struggles.

Pakistan, India, and China, all armed with nuclear weapons, skirmish at their borders over refugees, access to shared rivers, and arable land. In Bangladesh persistent typhoons and a higher sea level create storm surges that cause significant coastal erosion, making much of Bangladesh nearly uninhabitable. Further, the rising sea level contaminates freshwater supplies inland, creating a drinking-water and humanitarian crisis. By 2010 massive emigration occurs, causing tension in China and In-

dia. By 2025 internal conditions in China deteriorate dramatically, leading to civil and border wars.

As abrupt climate change lowers the ability of Earth and its ecosystems—including social, economic, and cultural systems—to support the finite number of people on the planet, aggressive wars are likely to be fought over food, water, and energy. The shifting motivation for confrontation alters which countries are most vulnerable. It may give rise to a more severe have/have-not mentality, causing resentment toward those nations with a higher capacity for supporting their populations. Humanity reverts to its norm of constant battles for diminishing resources, which the battles themselves would further reduce. Once again warfare defines human life.

[Consideration]

## BLOW, WINDS, AND CRACK YOUR CHEEKS

*From* My Cocaine Museum, *by Michael Taussig, published by the University of Chicago Press this month. Taussig is a professor of anthropology at Columbia and the author of* Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza, *published by The New Press in November.*

It is an embarrassing truism to point out how important knowledge of the weather, and especially the wind, must have been to the making of the modern world. If you look at the maps of the world drawn toward the end of the 1600s by the British pirate William Dampier, who cruised the waters between the island of Gorgona and the Río Timbiquí, you see the vast oceans with tiny black arrows coursing across them like so many swallows darting in parallel lines. These arrows show the "general and coasting trade winds" without knowledge of which there could not have been, it seems safe to say, a modern world, and certainly not a colonial world drawing Africa, Asia, and the Americas into one orbit with Europe.

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, maritime atlases contained no sailing directions for ports outside Europe or instructions for making ocean passages, and "this," wrote a British naval commander in 1931, "was the gap which Dampier determined to fill." Amazingly, "most of the information which he obtained at first hand was so accurate and comprehensive that it has been handed on from generation to generation with little alteration." Dampier's "directions for using the Atlantic trade winds," he added, "are still the best that can be given, and will

[Variations]

## WEE, SLEEKIT, COWRIN

*From descriptions of genetically modified mice available for scientific research and educational purposes from the Baylor College of Medicine's Mouse Mutagenesis Center for Developmental Defects.*

smaller head, flattened nose, bottom teeth growing unevenly, previously known as boxer
one eye closed, previously known as one-eyed jack
hyperactive, nervous, tremors, previously known as jittery 1
hyperactive, jittery, weaving gait, hearing loss, previously known as jittery 2
splayed gait, kyphosis, previously known as froggy
circling behavior, head bobbing, previously known as circler 6
torsional movements of the trunk and limbs, muscle weakness, previously known as hotfoot
seizures, followed by rapid tail movement, previously known as rattler
greasy-looking hair, previously known as greasy coat
skin fuses to close eyes, club feet, fused joints, previously known as combo 2000
short kinked tail, pudgy due to kinking throughout axial skeleton, head-tossing behavior, previously known as Peter Cottontail
male and female hypogonadism, previously known as wee willie
polydactyl hind feet, shortened, widened long bones, splayed gait, small, previously known as Charlie Chaplin
cyclic hair loss, previously known as Kojak
edema/swelling causes constrictions in digits/feet and tail, which become necrotic, previously known as scorpion tail
smaller, lethargic, reduced open-field activity, develops late-onset tremors upon movement, previously known as small lethargic
head tossing/circling in both directions, previously known as headtosser 8
lethargic, weak limbs, previously known as depression 2



*"Blast, #5707," by Naoya Hatakeyama, is part of a series of photographs of detonations in Japanese quarries. It was on display last winter at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, in Chicago.*

be found, with little alteration, in the Admiralty handbook upon ocean passages." Modern manuals have titles like *Admiralty Sailing Directions*, while Dampier's book, generally known as *The Discourse of Winds*, is more properly *Cap. Dampier: His Discourse of the Trade-Winds, Breezes, Storms, Seasons of the Year, Tides and Currents of the Torrid Zone Throughout the World*.

What a difference between these two titles! I look at Dampier's—at its length, its varied typography, its self-reference, its poetry and wide screen—and am reminded of Paul Valéry saying that once men imitated the patient process of nature but modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated. The *Admiralty Sailing Directions* confidently manifests the modern age's assumed dominance of nature, but what this dominance grew out of was something else. *The Discourse of Winds* speaks patiently, even lovingly, to the wind and learns its language—all the better to use it against itself, just as missionaries learn the natives' languages in order to convert them.

The cliche concerning the cliche of weather talk is that we talk about the weather as a way of avoiding talking about anything else, anything that would commit us to a point of view that might threaten the social bond for which weather talk is such a balm. The wild beyond, the weather, becomes hijacked as socializing grease for which grunts and groans might serve just as well. Hence the common observation that everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it. Weather talk is soft and sweet, acknowledging our alienation from nature no less than from one another, a relic of the superstition that to talk otherwise might rile it.

The fact that people seem happy enough to cite heat as a number of degrees is surely a sign of what Adorno called *reification*, by which he meant the habitual response in modern culture to abstract and then quantify even lived experience as though it were money. If you do this long enough, he maintained, the abstraction comes alive and seems self-empowered, like a person or a god. So, just as we find comfort in objectifying everything uniquely visceral in weather, with that very same action we inadvertently grant it

spectral status. Our TVs have done even better in this regard ever since the discovery of a striking mimesis of nature in the changing patterns of color on the Weather Channel, which we view in the air-conditioned calm of our living rooms. The pixels glimmer and dilate as the viewer takes in cosmic views of the planet spied from the heavenly heights of satellite cameras. High-pressure systems head north from neighboring countries and oceans are displayed under snowstorms, as hurricanes with names like Floyd threaten continents in their moody journeys. This hints at the return of prehistory, and indeed they persist in calling it not a *weather* but a *meteorological* report, meteors being those things that flash across the sky leaving trails of fire, portents of disturbance in the body politic.

The body itself speaks a different language from that of consciousness as regards heat and humidity. The thermostat built into our bodies operates outside consciousness, which is just as well because consciousness is notoriously error-prone. Weather connects the human body to the writhing storms over the Sahara no less than the twister roaring through Kansas and the steady, dissolute gray drizzle that makes for misery and romance in London. Why is it that apparently empty weather talk is so strangely satisfying? Could it be that what we mouth are the shreds and patches of previously vigorous magical correspondences?

Hearken now to *mana*, the basis of magic, according to the early twentieth-century anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, who took *mana*—a Polynesian word—to mean a force and a substance that magicians tapped into so as to accomplish their fine work, *mana* being something "invisible, marvelous, spiritual. . . . It cannot be experienced, since it truly absorbs all experience." This curious explanation seems to fit the enigmatic appeal of weather talk today, the great something that is simultaneously such a great nothing.

Similarly, among the Sioux of the U.S. plains, this force was known as *wakan*, embracing all mystery, all secret power, and all divinity. It is striking that although this mysterious power "enters into all," as Emile Durkheim says, it is weather, wind, and stars that are most frequently conjured into expressing its presence:

> Sometimes it is represented in the form of a wind, as a breath having its seat in the four cardinal points and moving everything: sometimes it is a voice heard in the crashing of the thunder; the sun, moon and stars are wakan. It is not a definite and definable power, the power of doing this or that; it is Power in an absolute sense, with no epithet or determination of any sort.

Perhaps *mana* expresses a sense of bodily consciousness writ large into cosmic consciousness. Such bodily consciousness is actually more like an unconscious, what might be called the "wisdom of the body" or the body's self-regulating autonomic nervous system, and so-called primitive societies created a magnificent theater of ritual and magic out of the network connecting this unconscious wisdom with the cosmos at large. Although weather talk today retains some inklings of *mana*, the mystical meanings have been eviscerated, the theater gutted, and the magic turned into pap because the cosmic frame of

[Refutation]

## BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

*From the Frequently Asked Questions page of the U.S. government's Hurricane Research Division website.*

*Why don't we try to destroy tropical cyclones by nuking them?*

During each hurricane season, there always appear suggestions that one should simply use nuclear weapons to try and destroy the storms. Apart from the fact that this might not even alter the storm, this approach neglects the problem that the released radioactive fallout would fairly quickly move with the trade winds to affect land areas and cause devastating environmental problems. Needless to say, this is not a good idea.

In addition, an explosive, even a nuclear explosive, produces a shock wave, or pulse of high pressure, that propagates away from the site of the explosion somewhat faster than the speed of sound. But such an event doesn't raise the barometric pressure after the shock has passed.

Attacking weak tropical waves or depressions before they have a chance to grow into hurricanes isn't promising either. About eighty of these disturbances form every year in the Atlantic Basin, but only about five become hurricanes in a typical year. There is no way to tell in advance which ones will develop.

[Poem]

# ERRATICS

*By Robert [illegible] published in [illegible]*

*I.*

[illegible]
[illegible]ical adventure fetch up in turnip fields,

[illegible]rs break them, cart them, making friends under their breath,
[illegible] down, frozen in hempen clothing, sullen under
surveillance.

Market-town cobbles massage soles of tourists' feet inexpertly,
prompting retreat off the street to a snug where over
cups of gin

four locals leaning towards a two-bar fire in a ghost
of eau-de-nil and fluted glass turn to stare, as if we had let
the ice age in.

*Two*

In food riots once, when likely-looking missiles, firmly cemented,
resisted a gang's work with posthammers to make
them feral,

these rioters, not flinging posthammers themselves
to break important windows, must have been inhibited
by a scruple,

aptness of cobble for the hand, in the scale of conscience
weighing little more than the hand itself plus an increment
of showing,

as if heroic acts must fall within the circle of the self,
like diving to prevent a drowning, instead of casting off a boat
and rowing.

*Three*

If a malachite egg in our bathroom yearned to nestle in my palm,
ambassador's cushions of flesh, who would not try
to be equal

to such desire, not souvenir nor monument, but fuel of touch,
romantic trajectory, beyond scrimmage, stumble and fall—
my sequel.

Lundra's renewal flowers through ice to great applause,
as the fragile egg survives sod's law's hammer, egg-collectors,
skua's hunger,

mercury clambering up at dawn to the big thaw,
avalanche of stones, each stone highstepping by to leave me
safer, younger.

reference binding us to the natural world now barely exists. For us, weather no longer belongs to *wakan*, to divine mysteries, or to "pure force." Instead it has become a floating signifier, the empty chatter with neighbors in the elevator. What remains of weather's cosmic frame and force is social lubricant, mangled residue of *wakan* as the basis of religion, society's worship of itself. And yet perhaps weather talk today is not merely an absence or an impoverished form of prior practice and fantasy; maybe weather for us is God after the death of God. As Nietzsche asked: "Do we not feel the breath of empty space?"

In his notes on boredom and the weather, Walter Benjamin wrote:

> Nothing is more characteristic than that precisely this most intimate and mysterious affair, the working of the weather on humans, should have become the theme of their emptiest chatter. Nothing bores the ordinary man more than the cosmos. Hence, for him, the deepest connection between weather and boredom. How true the ironic overcoming of this attitude in the story of the splenetic Englishman who wakes up one morning and shoots himself because it is raining.

What would it take for us to realize this: that every time you feel a breeze or watch a cloud pass, remember you are bearing witness to the workings of the cosmos bending a blade of grass or rustling wastepaper in the city street? Today we seem as far from that as ever. We are, as it were, in suspension, permanently thresholded, because fuller awareness of the cosmos is blunted by the conditions of modern life, from which even death is removed. Not for us the rain dance of the Zuni. Not for us thunder as the voice of God or the shamans descended from the sun who control the tempest. Only the glimpse remains, and it remains as refuse to be picked over and played with in the boredom-suffused weather talk, privileged medium of sociability like the clouds themselves, soft murmurings fleecy-lined in the elevator. ■

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# IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three

uno, dos, tres

un, deux, trois

一、二、三

eins, zwei, drei

אחת, שתיים, שלוש

jeden, dwa, trzy

एक, दो, तीन

moja, mbili, tatu

일, 이, 삼

een, twee, drie

один, два, три

uno, due, tre

unus, duo, tres

یو، دوه، درې

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# WHAT DEMOCRACY?

## The case for abolishing the United States Senate

*By Richard N. Rosenfeld*

Americans believe in the idea of democracy. We fight wars in its name and daily pledge allegiance to its principles. Curiously, the fervor with which we profess our faith in democracy is matched only by the contempt with which we regard our politics and politicians. How interesting that we should so dislike the process that we claim to revere. Perhaps, however, our unhappiness with politics points to something significant; perhaps Americans dislike the daily reality of their political system precisely because it falls short of being a proper democracy. Indeed, in the last presidential election, we saw a man take office who did not win the popular vote. Money above all else shapes our political debate and determines its outcome, and in the realm of public policy, even when an overwhelming democratic majority expresses its preference (as for national health insurance), deadlocks, vetoes, filibusters, and "special interests" stand in the way. No wonder so few people vote in national elections; we have become a nation of spectators, not citizens.

The United States of America is not, strictly speaking, a democracy; indeed, the U.S. Constitution was deliberately designed to prevent the unfettered expression of the people's will. Yet the Founders were not, as some imagine, of one mind concerning the proper shape of the new American union, and their disputes are instructive. The political dysfunction that some imagine to be a product of recent cultural decadence has been with us from the beginning. In fact, the document that was meant to prevent democracy in America has bequeathed the American people a politics of minority rule in which our leaders must necessarily pursue their unpopular aims by means of increasingly desperate stratagems of deceit and persuasion.

Yet hope remains, for if Americans have little real experience of democracy, they remain a nation convinced that the best form of government is by and for the people. Growing numbers of Americans suspect that all is not right

*Richard N. Rosenfeld is the author of* American Aurora: A Democratic-Republican Returns. The Suppressed History of Our Nation's Beginnings and the Heroic Newspaper That Tried to Report It, *which recounts the battle for civil liberties and a more democratic federal constitution in the early American republic*

THE LESS POPULOUS STATES HAVE EXTRACTED BENEFITS FROM THE NATION QUITE OUT OF PROPORTION TO THEIR POPULATIONS

with the American Way. Citizens, faced with the prospect of sacrificing th[eir] [chil]dren and grandchildren on the altar of supply-side e[co]nomics, the prospect of giving up new schools and hospitals so that th[e] colony in Iraq might have zip codes and modern garbage trucks, have begu[n] to ask hard questions. Politics, properly understood as the deliberate exercis[e] of citizenship by a free people, appears to be enjoying a renaissance, but th[e] hard point must be made nonetheless that tinkering with campaign-financ[e] reform is unlikely to be sufficient to the task. True reform becomes possibl[e] only if Americans are willing to return to the root of our political experimen[t] and try again. And if democracy is our aim, the first object of our constitu[-] tional revision must be the United States Senate.

In America today, U.S. senators from the twenty-six smallest states, representing a mere 18 percent of the nation's population, hold a majorit[y] in the United States Senate, and, therefore, under the Constitution, re[-] gardless of what the President, the House of Representatives, or even a overwhelming majority of the American people wants, nothing become[s] law if those senators object. The result has been what one would expec[t]. The less populous states have extracted benefits from the rest of the na[-] tion quite out of proportion to their populations. As Frances E. Lee an[d] Bruce I. Oppenheimer have demonstrated in their *Sizing Up the Senat[e]*, the citizens of less populous states receive more federal funds per capit[a] than the citizens of the more populous states.* And what happens if th[e] larger states, with a majority of the people, object? Not much. Today, th[e] nine largest states, containing a majority of the American people, are rep[-] resented by only 18 of the 100 senators in the United States Senate.

The fact that a Senate majority reflects a majority of states rather tha[n] a majority of the people originated in what is erroneously and euphemistic[-] cally called the "Great Compromise," which small states extracted fro[m] larger states in 1787 at the federal Constitutional Convention. All states, large and small, wanted each state's vote in the House of Representative[s] to be proportioned to the size of its population. Small states wanted a[n] equal vote for every state represented in the Senate, regardless of popul[a]- tion. What followed was hardly a compromise, just the unhappy acquie[s]- cence of larger states to an undemocratic demand by smaller states, whic[h] were otherwise refusing to be part of a new national government.

When we look back on this so-called compromise, we should be wary o[f] exaggerating the enthusiasm of the drafters or the public. When the propos[-] al for an equal vote for each state in the U.S. Senate came before the federa[l] al Constitutional Convention on July 16, 1787, three states (New York, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island) failed to cast a vote; four states (Virginia, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia) voted against the proposal; the Massachusetts delegation split evenly (thereby dividing their state's vote pro and con); and only a minority of five of the thirteen states (Delaware, North Carolina, Maryland, New Jersey, and Connecticut) carried the day. Furthermore, as the census of 1790 would later confirm, the plurality of five states that carried the day actually represented a smaller portion of the American people than the four states that voted against the proposal. The yeasaying states represented less than 33 percent of the nation's non-slave popula- tion (and no greater percentage if one counted slaves). Unfortunately, voting at the federal Constitutional Convention was as undemocratic as voting in the United States Senate is today. Each state had an equal vote, regardless of the state's population. As convention delegate James Wilson observed, "Our Constituents, had they voted as their representatives did, would have stood as 1/6 against the equality, and 1/3 only in favor of it."

In the aftermath of the federal Constitutional Convention, many naysa[y-]

* *Many federal entitlement programs, once distributed to the American people in proportion to their needs and entitlements, have been converted to block grants for lump-sum distributions to the states, disguising the fact that citizens of smaller states get more of these benefits per capita than an equitable "entitlement" would allow.*

s became yeasayers in persuading the thirteen states to ratify the final document. James Madison, who had argued vigorously against states having qual votes in the U.S. Senate, performed a lawyerlike pirouette in *The ederalist Papers*, as he propagandized for ratification of the final document. he states agreed in the end, and the Union was created. Today, however, e are not thirteen but fifty states, all of which (except the original thirteen) ccepted the Senate's undemocratic voting system not as a concession to get naller states to form a union but rather as a constitutional fact of life. Furhermore, except for Texas and California, the additional thirty-seven states ere not independent before they became part of the Union; they were secons of territory that the United States already owned or claimed to own. Consequently, the inhabitants of the other states were already U.S. citizens efore Congress allowed them to become citizens of the new states, which ere created by Congress. There is thus no reason to apply the rationale of the Great Compromise to the vast majority of states that are part of this nation today. So what rationale shall we apply for our Senate?

To understand the antidemocratic history and unsatisfactory logic that ave rise to American senates (both federal and state), one must start with the entury preceding that of the American Revolution, when the people of Engnd rose up in a fit of regicide, civil war, and tumult to end the absolutism of heir Stuart kings ("accountable to none but God only") and to shift sovereignty from the king to "the king-in-parliament," meaning to a king whose acons depended on the approval of two branches of parliament. This new rrangement was basically a recognition of property classes in Britain, balancing he king (Britain's largest property owner), the hereditary House of ords (Anglican bishops and titled aristocrats, "Lords Spiritual and emporal," also representing vast land holdings), and a House of ommons (which represented a rising mercantile class of property wners whose demands for representation gave rise to this "Glorius Revolution"). Yet the British also came to see this balance as a rotection of liberty, finding justification in the writings of the Greek nd Roman philosophers, most notably in those of Polybius, who dided the forms of government into rule by one (monarchy), by the w (aristocracy), and by the many (democracy) but insisted that each f these forms, unless balanced by the other two, would degenerate nto tyranny, oligarchy, or mob rule, respectively. Thus it was, in the inds of most Britons, a protection against tyranny that their contitution embraced the one (the king), the few (the aristocratic louse of Lords), and the many (the more representative House of ommons). As Britain's most famous jurist, William Blackstone, arued in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, "If ever it should appen that the independence of any one of the three should be lost, r that it should become subservient to the views of either of the ther two, there would soon be an end of our constitution." As Britain's leading political philosopher, John Locke, summarized at he end of the century, the purpose of government was to secure veryone's "lives, liberties, and estates."

In the century that followed England's "Glorious Revolution," hilosophers in France, politicians in America, and Whig critics with n England itself had much to say about the British constitution and whether its balances secured or threatened liberty. Chief among them vas the French philosopher Charles Montesquieu, who, in his *Spirit of the Laws*, ccepted the balance among the one, the few, and the many but found a more mportant protection of liberty in the separation of executive, legislative, nd judicial functions. As France and America approached the time of their wn revolutions, most democrats accepted Montesquieu's theory of separaion, but many totally rejected the British balance among monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. These critics argued, as many Whigs in England did,

THERE IS NO REASON TO APPLY THE GREAT COMPROMISE TO THE MAJORITY OF STATES MAKING UP THIS NATION TODAY



Illustrations by Tim Bower

## THOMAS PAINE HELPS AMERICANS TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM BRITAIN'S ARISTOCRATIC CONSTITUTION



...but the monarch's power of appointment and expenditure could (and did) corrupt the British Parliament and prevented Parliament from representing the people it was supposed to represent. Looking despondently at these developments, English Whig James Burgh wrote, in his *Political Disquisitions*, that William Blackstone had "placed the sovereignty wrong, viz. in the government; whereas it should have been in the people." Suffering "intolerable" and "coercive" acts of the British government, many in America agreed.

America fired its opening shot at the British constitution in January of 1776, when Thomas Paine came out with his revolutionary pamphlet *Common Sense*, urging Americans to declare their independence from Britain and to distance themselves from the British constitution (under which they had lived for generations). "I know it is difficult," he wrote, "to get over local or long standing prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new republican materials."* Paine condemned Britain's three-way balance as "First. — The remains of monarchical tyranny in the person of the king. Secondly. — The remains of aristocratical tyranny in the persons of the peers [the House of Lords]. Thirdly. — The new republican materials, in the persons of the commons, on whose virtue depends the freedom of England." He urged that any American government consist of only one democratically elected legislative chamber, with no aristocratic or kingly branch to veto its decisions (the executive branch would be appointed by and answer to the legislature). Quoting Burgh, Paine urged "a large and equal representation," meaning a large number of representatives (so that each will answer to a small constituency) and a large number of voters (meaning that neither property nor any other special interest should limit the right to vote and thus limit equal representation). "A small number of electors, or a small number of representatives," Paine warned, "are equally dangerous. But if the number of the representatives be not only small, but unequal, the danger is increased."

The most virulent response to Paine's *Common Sense* came from New Englander John Adams, who introduced the phrase "checks and balances" into the American language and condemned Paine's plan of government as "so democratical, without any restraints or even an Attempt at any Equilibrium or Counterpoise." Adams countered *Common Sense* in April with his own pamphlet, *Thoughts on Government*, which argued that any American government should have its own three-way balance—specifically, two separate legislative chambers and a separate chief executive, each with the power to veto the other two. In such a government, he wrote, "equal interests among the people should have equal interests in it." Adams enumerated his arguments against a single-chamber legislature as follows:

> 1. A single assembly is ... subject to fits of humor, starts of passion, flights of enthusiasm, partialities, or prejudice, and consequently productive of hasty results and absurd judgments. 2. A single assembly is apt to be avaricious, and in time will not scruple to exempt itself from burdens, which it will lay without compunction, on its constituents. 3. A single assembly is apt to grow ambitious, and after a time will not hesitate to vote itself perpetual. 4. A representative assembly is unfit to exercise the executive power, for want of two essential properties, secrecy and dispatch. 5. A representative assembly is still less qualified for the judicial power, because it is too numerous, too slow, and too little skilled in the laws. 6. ... [A] single assembly, possessed of all the powers of

*Paine made similar comments about America's new federal Constitution, observing: "As the Federal Constitution is a copy, though not quite so base as the original, of the form of the British Government, an imitation of its vices was naturally to be expected."*

government, would make arbitrary laws for their own interest, execute all laws arbitrarily for their own interest, and adjudge all controversies in their own favor.

If these were the only arguments in favor of two chambers in the legisla-e, one could easily dismiss them, if only by questioning why having two ambers wouldn't simply double the problems of one chamber. If repre-ıtatives of the people couldn't resolve their passions, discard their preju-es, control their greed, etc., in one deliberative body, why would a sec-d group of representatives, arguing over the same matters, do any better? ıd if that second chamber were to reach a different conclusion from the st chamber, why would we believe that this second slice of humanity had ıched a better conclusion than the first? Or, if we knew that the second amber were better or would reach a better conclusion than the first, why ıuld we not make the second chamber the only chamber and avoid the risks the first chamber's mistakes?*

Paine's democratic message of January found its echo in July, when Thomas ferson drafted the Declaration of Independence, shifting American sov-eignty from Britain's king-in-parliament to the American people. Pro-ıiming that "all men are created equal," Jefferson declared that government sted on "the consent of the governed" and that its purpose was to secure alienable rights, among them "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." ferson did not use John Locke's phrase "lives, liberties and estates," which ıuld have tied America's political rights to property ownership, as in itain's three-way balance. Jefferson opposed property qualifications for ice-holding or voting. "I have not observed men's honesty to increase with eir riches," he wrote.

After the Declaration of Independence, America's former British colonies gan to draft new state constitutions, choosing between Paine's model of gov-ıment and John Adams's. In September, Paine joined Franklin in propa-ting the nation's most democratic state constitution—that of Pennsylva-a—which called for a single-chamber legislature without wealth or property alifications for voters or representatives and with a weak plural executive at had no power to initiate or veto legislation. Franklin opposed the idea a three-way balance, observing, "The Division of the Legislature into two three Branches in England, was it the product of Wisdom, or the Effect of ecessity, arising from the preexisting Prevalence of an odious Feudal Sys-m?" He spoke openly at the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention ainst a two-chamber legislature, which he likened to "putting one horse be-re a cart and the other behind it, and whipping them both. If the horses are equal strength, the wheels of the cart, like the wheels of government, will stand still." For Paine and Franklin, two legislative chambers were a prescription for deadlock, and, with the advantage of hindsight, who among us would disagree?

If the arguments about the number of legislative chambers had simply en about the mechanics of decision-making, Paine and Franklin might well ıve had their way, but it wasn't, which is why they lost their argument. For ghteenth-century Americans as well as for the English, the purpose of a sec-ıd chamber was really to protect wealth and aristocracy from the demands a democratic majority. As historian Jackson Main has written, "The the-y of balanced government suited colonial political figures because it jus-ied their resistance to both monarchy and democracy, and at the same time also justified upper-class rule."

In all this, Adams was an American exemplar, drafting a first constitu-on for his home state of Massachusetts that divided legislative power nong a house of representatives (members were required to possess at least

THE PURPOSE OF A SECOND CHAMBER WAS TO PROTECT THE WEALTHY FROM THE DEMANDS OF A DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

*As Benjamin Franklin put it: "If one Part of the Legislature may control the Operations the other, may not the Impulses of Passion, the Combinations of Interest, the Intrigues Faction, the Haste of Folly, or the Spirit of Encroachment in the one of those Bodies struct the Good proposed by the other and frustrate its Advantages to the Public?"*

THE UNITED

nds in property), a senate (senators, at least 300 pounds in prop
pounds in property), each with the po
er to veto the other two and each to be elected by constituencies meeti
ified qualifications for wealth or property. In describing the Massach
setts senate to its citizenry, the state's constitutional convention wro
The House of Representatives is intended as the Representative of t
ans, and the Senate of the property of the Commonwealth." In his ov
ense of Massachusetts's two-chamber legislature, Adams extolled a "n
ural aristocracy," which he found "formed partly by genius, partly by birt
and partly by riches." He asked rhetorically, "How shall the legislator av
himself of their influence for the equal benefit of the public?" Then witho
hesitation, "I answer, by arranging them all, or at least the most conspic
ous of them, together in one assembly, by the name of a senate."

When delegates gathered to draft a new federal constitution in 1787, m
states had a senate or legislative council as a check on their more represe
tative lower houses. With few exceptions, states imposed higher proper
qualifications on those who voted for or served in state senates than they d
on those who voted for or served in state lower houses. Coupled with religio
tests for holding public office (i.e., Christianity in Delaware, Maryland, Ma
achusetts, and Pennsylvania, specifically Protestantism in New Hampshi
New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont, Connecticut, a
Georgia), these property qualifications elevated many state senates to the fun
tional equivalent of the British House of Lords, meaning a bastion of "spi
tual and temporal" aristocracy. Therefore, when the federal Constitution
Convention decided in 1787 that U.S. senators would be appointed by sta
legislatures rather than elected by the people at large, the drafters were a
tually placing the choice of U.S. senators in the control of state leaders wh
had met their states' highest qualifications for property and religion.

Today, these property and religious qualifications are likely to strike us
quaint historical oddities. By the middle of the nineteenth century, all stat
had disestablished their Protestant churches and had eliminated religious te
for holding public office as well as wealth and property qualifications for v
ing and office-holding. In 1913 the nation amended the federal Constit
tion to remove the choice of U.S. senator from party bosses and greedy ca
italists who were controlling state legislatures, and instead placed the electi
of U.S. senators directly in the hands of the American people. In the
things, Americans spoke loudly in favor of democracy.

Yet the United States Senate stands today as a grotesque monument
that antidemocratic legacy; it remains largely a preserve of wealthy white ma
aristocrats drawn from an entirely different economic class than the peop
they purport to represent. Because the United States failed to heed Pain
warnings against a small and unequal representation, 40 to 50 percent of U.
senators are millionaires (as opposed to less than 1 percent of the general po
ulation), with massive wealth requirements for those who wish to be sen
tors. In election year 2000, wealthy candidates spent $107,700,000 of the
own money in seeking election to the U.S. Senate, and the average cost
a successful campaign was more than $7 million. Notably, a successful ru
for the House of Representatives cost about one tenth as much.

Because the U.S. House of Representatives has a large and equal repr
ation drawn from relatively small congressional voting districts, a co
ional representative is more likely to be drawn from, to know, and to
known by the ordinary people he or she is supposed to "represent." For th
n, he or she will need less money to communicate with voters and w
money less productive (sometimes even counterproductive) in infl
ing what voters think. Not so for the U.S. Senate. Because the Senate
l body drawn from large and unequal statewide constituencies, senator
candidates often need vast sums of money (or family or friends with acce
to vast sums of money) to reach and influence as many as 10 million, or
million, or, in the case of California, more than 30 million people who m
have little or no idea of who a candidate is. Needless to say, this disadva

ges women, blacks, the young, and other groups with a smaller percentage millionaires. And the situation will only get worse. As state populations ow, the cost of reaching those populations will also grow, adding to the adntage of personal wealth for those who wish to run for the Senate.

The Senate's "small and unequal" representation discriminates not only n the basis of wealth, sex, and age but also on the basis of race and religion. mes Madison recognized in 1787 that an equal vote for each state in the enate did not properly distinguish states with predominantly white populations from those with large African-American slave populations (whose umbers were counted, though at 60 percent, in apportioning seats for the ouse of Representatives). He could make a similar observation today. Toay, African Americans and Hispanics make up only 11 percent of the population in the twenty-six smallest states constituting a majority in the U.S. enate, though they are 30 percent of the population in the nine largest states, olding a majority of the people. Similarly, Catholics are only 16 percent and ws less than 1 percent in the smallest states with a majority in the U.S. Sene, but they are 28 percent and more than 3 percent, respectively, of the rgest states with a majority of the people. For Muslims, Asian Americans, ne poor, and virtually every other group and category of voter, there may e important differences between the demographics of the smallest states and ose of the largest states or of the average state or of the median state, so at an equal vote for every state in the Senate is not only increasingly unemocratic. It is increasingly unrepresentative as well.

The statewide election of senators (as opposed to the election of representatives by small congressional voting districts) works a further discrimination gainst minorities, denying them the ability to elect "one of their own" nd thereby to have a voice in Senate debate. Even if blacks, for example, make up more than a third of a state's population (as they do Mississippi), they could still find their voice in the Senate to be omeone like Mississippi Republican Senator Trent Lott, who has supported racially segregated schools and opposed a national holiday to onor Martin Luther King Jr. To the shame of us all, the Senate's small representation" and correlatively large (statewide) voting onstituencies mean that it will remain a singularly white institution, ven as the House of Representatives continues to reflect changes in ne nation's racial complexion.

The "small and unequal representation" of the U.S. Senate infects ne judicial and executive branches as well as the legislative branch. ecause the Senate is the only institution whose "consent" is conitutionally required for presidential appointments to the U.S. upreme Court, the undemocratic and unrepresentative nature of ne Senate can skew the bias of the nation's highest court. In the ase of the appointment of the highly controversial, conservative, nd arguably sexist Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, for exmple, the Senate confirmed Thomas's appointment (by a margin f four votes, 52–48), despite the fact that the senators who voted gainst him represented 7 million more people than the senators who oted for him. In that case, senators from the nine largest states with majority of the people voted two-to-one against the Thomas conrmation (their vote was 12–6), while senators from the twenty-six mallest states with a majority in the Senate gave Thomas his fourote margin of victory (they favored him 28–24).

Because the number of each state's presidential electors is the sum f its two U.S. senators plus the number of its representatives in the House, he unfairness of an equal number of senators for every state also corrupts the ntire presidential election process, which in election year 2000 awarded 71 electors to George W. Bush and only 266 to Al Gore, despite the fact that Gore was the popular favorite by a margin of more than 500,000 votes. Had he number of each state's electoral votes simply been the number of its repesentatives in the House (and, therefore, been proportioned to the size of its

## THE "SMALL AND UNEQUAL" REPRESENTATION OF THE U.S. SENATE INFECTS ALL THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT



THE MEN WHO WROTE [illegible] CONSTITUTION WERE CONCERNED THAT DEMOCRACY MIGHT TURN INTO MOB RULE



population), Gore would have enjoyed an electoral vote victory of 225 to 21[illegible] consistent with the preference of the American people. In 2000 the small[illegible] constituting a majority in the Senate cast their electoral votes nearly two-to-one for Bush, while the largest states boasting a majority of the people cast their electoral votes two-to-one for Gore.

The corruption of our political process does not stop with the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of government in their normal functioning, however; it undermines "the sovereignty of the people" as well. Although "we, the people of the United States" have retained the right to amend the Constitution with a two-thirds vote of the Congress and a three-quarters vote of the states, today this means that small-state senators representing only 8 percent of the people or the thirteen smallest states with fewer than 5 percent of the people can scuttle any amendment. Conversely (and perversely), if today's thirty-eight smallest states—with 40 percent of the people—want to change the Constitution (say, to prohibit gay marriage), they have the required three quarters to amend, regardless of what a democratic majority of the people might prefer. It is difficult to see how this is "government by the people," but it's not clear whether the drafters would have cared.

The men who wrote our federal Constitution were mostly concerned that democracy, without checks and balances, might turn into mob rule. Shortly before the federal convention, John Adams circulated the first volume of his monumental *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*, which defended constitutions built on his Massachusetts model against the unicameral ideas of Paine and Franklin. In his *Defence*, Adams returned to the arguments of Polybius (among others) and to the ancient theory of the one, the few, and the many, declaring, "If I should undertake to say there never was a good government in the world that did not consist of the three simple species of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, I think I may make it good." In the end, he did make it good, reviewing ancient and modern constitutions to conclude that "the English constitution is, in theory, both for the adjustment of the balance and the prevention of its vibrations, the most stupendous fabric of human invention." Many at the federal Constitutional Convention agreed.

Alexander Hamilton proclaimed, on the floor of the convention, that "the British Government was the best in the world; and that he doubted whether anything short of it would do in America." John Dickinson argued for "the Senate to consist of the most distinguished characters, distinguished for their rank in life and their weight of property, and bearing as strong a likeness to the British House of Lords as possible." James Madison declared that "the Senate ought to come from, and represent, the Wealth of the nation." Edmund Randolph wanted the "number of Members for the Senate . . . to be less than the House of Commons . . . to restrain, if possible, the fury of democracy." Benjamin Rush predicted, at the start of the convention, "Mr. Adams's book has diffused such excellent principles among us, that there is little doubt of our adopting a vigorous and compounded federal legislature." And so they did.

But haven't times changed? The British themselves no longer subscribe to the Polybian balance or to the theory of the one, the few, and the many. The British now vest all legislative authority in the British House of Commons (their single chamber "of the many") and even allow the House of Commons to appoint their nation's executive branch in the person of the prime minister and his cabinet. By the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949, the House of Lords can no longer veto acts of the House of Commons and can no longer delay legislation for more than a year. Although the British monarchy retains a theoretical veto over

ts of the British Parliament, no monarch has dared to exercise that prerogative for nearly three hundred years. Today, the House of Commons reigns supreme on legislative and executive matters. The monarch and the House of Lords have merely advisory roles.

American views also have changed. Many drafters at the Constitutional Convention saw U.S. senators as agents of the state legislatures that could elect them, and thus as defenders of the residual powers of the states. Since then the Seventeenth Amendment took the power to appoint U.S. senators away from state legislatures. Americans gave their lives in the Civil War to confirm that the nation is not a confederation of independent sovereign states but rather a union "of, by, and for the people." Since the Civil War (and especially after the Fourteenth Amendment), it has been the federal judiciary, not the Senate or the House, that enforces our Bill of Rights freedoms (even against the states) and the U.S. Supreme Court that delimits the Tenth Amendment's mandate that "powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Finally, one must note that federalism carries no requirement that we have a senate or that less populous states have an equal vote in a senate. Federalism is concerned with what powers the federal *government* does or does not have vis-a-vis the states, not with how the federal government exercises those powers it legitimately has.

But what about protecting small states against large states, farmers against manufacturers, "old country values" against "the corruption of the city"? Pure mythology. Rhode Island and Delaware, among the smallest states, have less farmland and fewer farmers than either California or New York, two of the largest states. Nevada's small population is concentrated in Las Vegas and Reno, giving it a special interest in gambling, not farming. Besides, why should farmers have a greater say than manufacturers on questions of energy policy or airline deregulation? Why should country folk have a greater say than city folk on decisions about defense appropriations or funding AIDS research? If small states represent special interests and values, do such interests and values justify giving those states a veto over every national question?

But what about "the tyranny of the majority," that insidious and arguably oxymoronic phrase that French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville added to our vocabulary in 1835? The answer is that democracy is itself a protection against tyranny, whether by the one (autocracy) or by the few (oligarchy). In assuring that our representative democracy works properly, we must be vigilant that Paine's "two ancient tyrannies" don't reincarnate themselves into our remedies. Furthermore, we must distinguish between tyrannical decisions and unwise decisions. We insulate ourselves from tyrannical decisions by declaring certain rights of individuals and minorities to be inalienable and by enshrining those rights, as we have, in the U.S. Bill of Rights. So long as the democratic majority respects those rights, a majority's decisions may prove unwise but should not be considered tyrannical.

What about occasions when the U.S. House of Representatives has been "wrong" and our undemocratic and unrepresentative Senate has been "right"? But what about the opposite, when the Senate was wrong? And doesn't such a judgment depend on one's political viewpoint? If, as a matter of experiment, we were to allow a roll of the dice, the chirp of a parakeet, or a phase of the moon to veto the decisions of the House of Representatives, there would also be times when the dice, the bird, or the moon would be right and the House of Representatives would be wrong. What would that prove? And what would we do about it? Would our response be to turn the dice, the bird, or the moon into a permanent part of the government? Or would we simply work to improve the decision-making procedures of the House of Representatives, by requiring extensive public hearings, large supermajorities, or a "cooling-off" period followed by a second vote on important questions such as amendments to the Constitution, so that future decisions would be better informed and better deliberated?

DEMOCRACY IS A PROTECTION AGAINST TYRANNY, WHETHER BY THE ONE (AUTOCRACY) OR BY THE FEW (OLIGARCHY)

TODAY, WE CITIZENS MUST RESUME THE HISTORIC STRUGGLE TO BRING FORTH DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

Most Americans would not want monarchy or aristocracy to substitute for the will of the democratic majority. In this Age of Information, they simply expect today's democratic majority or its representatives to inform themselves on the issues and to act thoughtfully and carefully, with a readiness to change course if they find they have made a mistake. If the House, acting alone, were to make a mistake, the House would presumably correct itself, or, if it didn't, the people who elected wrongheaded representatives would elect new representatives to take their place. Here, too, the Senate is woefully deficient, because a wrongheaded senator has to answer to the voters only once in six years. As Thomas Jefferson observed, "A government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice . . . by representatives chosen by himself and responsible to him at short periods." "In the General Government," he charged, "the House of Representatives is mainly republican; the Senate scarcely so at all."

How, then, does one abolish the Senate? The small states that forced the drafters to accept an undemocratic and unrepresentative U.S. Senate did their best to prevent any change. Article Five of the U.S. Constitution reads, "No State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate," suggesting that we may not be able to reform the U.S. Senate, unless every state, including the smallest, agrees. Not a likely prospect!

An ironic alternative to outright abolition might be possible, however, which could prove to be a new "Great Compromise." Perhaps, in tribute to the drafters who so admired the British constitution, we could allow the Senate to continue in the footsteps of the British House of Lords, retaining its undemocratic, unrepresentative, and aristocratic membership (i.e., "equal suffrage" for each state, large and small) but with greatly reduced powers, so that it might, as in Britain, inform and delay, but not defeat, measures of "the people's house," which, in this country, means the House of Representatives. By conferring final lawmaking authority on the House of Representatives, we would thereby enhance the prestige and importance of our most democratic and representative branch, attracting more qualified ("wiser") candidates to its membership and encouraging greater citizen attention to its work.

Why would those citizens who live in small states support such an amendment? Because they, like all Americans, believe in "one person, one vote," fair representation, justice, equality, and democracy. As Thomas Paine wrote in January of 1776, "We have every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth." More than two centuries later, we still know that to be true.

In the centuries that have passed since "our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that 'all men are created equal,'" we, the children of these Founders, have slogged a long and difficult path toward a place of greater liberty. Along this path, we have disestablished the Founders' state churches, removed their wealth, property, and religious qualifications from voting or office-holding, abolished their enslavement of African Americans, ended their second-class treatment of women, paid compensation for their abuses of Native Americans, deprived their elites in state legislatures of the power to appoint presidential electors and U.S. senators, and made the Bill of Rights a guarantee not merely against actions of their new federal government but against actions of their old state governments as well. Along this path no principle of equality or democracy has been more important than that of "one person, one vote," and yet the U.S. Senate remains a glaring exception to this rule, a relic of Paine's two ancient tyrannies that continues to infect our political system. Today, we must resume the historic struggle to bring forth democracy in America: We must do away with our small and unequal Senate. This is America's next step.

# IN THE VALLEY OF THE GUN

## A massacre unfolds in eastern Congo

*By Bryan Mealer*

The Ugandan army threw a big parade the day they began rolling out of Bunia. Shops closed early, and hundreds of sweaty bodies jammed both sides of the airport road to watch the soldiers march past one last time. A thirty-piece army brass band stumbled through a lackadaisical rendition of the Ugandan anthem, followed by a procession of armored personnel carriers, gun-mounted pickups, and two rattletrap Russian tanks piled with dozens of gaunt, whooping soldiers. The traffic made the dust unbearable, and when the tanks sputtered past they coated the reeling crowd with an aerosol of hot engine grease.



As several companies of soldiers took up the rear of the parade—weathered Kalashnikovs dangling at their hip, gum boots slapping the yellow dirt—young girls rushed out and loaded them with cigarettes, boiled eggs, and bags of peanuts. Farther up the road, groups of women spat at the soldiers' feet and shouted for them to just go away. Uganda's slow withdrawal of 6,000 soldiers from Bunia and the rest of the Ituri province was part of an agreement made with the United Nations at the end of the five-year war in Congo, one that had involved five African armies and had left more than 3 million people dead, more than any other conflict since World War II. The parade, on April 25, 2003, was a colossal event, never mind the size, for it marked the end of a brutal period of war and foreign oppression, and yet, much to our collective fear, it also began a new period of slaughter.

Uganda's presence in Ituri had only deepened the old rift between two tribes in the region, the Hema and the Lendu. The Hema were the wealthy, educated elite tribe of the province, the land and cattle owners who garnered favor under Belgian rule and later benefited under the corrupt and destructive reign of Mobutu Sese Seko. For generations they had dominated the majority Lendu, poor farmers who occupied the remote hills. The tribes disliked and distrusted each other yet coexisted in relative peace, and marriage across tribal lines was not unknown. When Uganda entered the Congo war in 1998, whatever strained harmony that had existed between the two tribes was shattered. The Ugandans trained both Hema and Lendu militias as proxy fighters to protect their black-market trade in pillaged gold, coltan (a mineral used in cell phones), and timber. It didn't take long before the Hema and Lendu turned on each other, trading their traditional bows and spears for new Kalashnikovs and rocket launchers.

On April 3, twenty-six miles north of Bunia, hundreds of Lendu fighters had swept through the remote villages of Drodro, Largu, and Jissa, and slaughtered as many as 1,000 Hema residents. The attack, prompted by the blow of a bullhorn, had lasted just over two hours. The Lendu had killed most of their victims with machetes, then split open many of the bodies and feasted on the warm hearts and livers. According to a few survivors, the Lendu had made fires to cook their meat. The massacre had been so efficient and macabre that humanitarian workers in Congo were afraid it was spiraling into another

*Bryan Mealer is a writer living in New York City.*

Photograph © Peter Busomoke/AFP/Getty Images

Rwanda. I arrived in Bunia two [illegible] fore the parade with plans [illegible] ride into Drodro to docum[illegible] tack, but it soon became [illegible] other massacre was going on [illegible] right there in town.

Anticipating the withdrawal, hundreds of [illegible] Hema and Lendu [illegible] the hills [illegible] militia had been mostly dissolved after being defeated by the Ugandan army a month earlier, but the Lendu were hitting the army every day, slowly closing in on the town. The last Ugandan soldiers were scheduled to leave Bunia in two weeks, on May 6. When they did, dumb logic told us the Lendu would sweep right in. We all saw it coming: the press corps, aid workers, and especially Bunia's population of Hema, who soon took on the mien of the hunted. Everyone saw the massacre coming, it seemed, but the United Nations. The Lendu were going to sack Bunia when the Ugandans pulled out, and the U.N. was rolling out a red carpet. In one of their dizzying attempts at "pacification," the U.N. mission in Congo (MONUC) had invited both Lendu and Hema leaders into town for talks: tribal "intellectuals" who gave themselves names like "general secretary," along with militia leaders, savage men who'd decorated themselves with phony military ranks and credentials. The Lendu leaders brought in dozens of "bodyguards" from the bush, and none of them was asked by MONUC to surrender his weapons. Thus the fall of Bunia began from within.

After a couple of days I quickly fell into the rhythms of the town. I buzzed up and down the broad boulevard on the back of motorcycle taxis and hired a driver. I checked into the Hotel Takabeya, just on the edge of the bustling market, where the women wore brassy blonde wigs and served me greasy omelettes and tea at 6:30 in the morn




[illegible] Bunia's MONUC [illegible] back on rides into Drodro, maybe [illegible] some interviews, then have dinner at the Club Hellenique. And at night, [illegible] the patio of my hotel room as the BBC and Voice of America crackled on my shortwave radio.

The Mobutu government had neglected Bunia for decades, leaving the stately colonial buildings along the boulevard to crumble and fade. Fighting between the Ugandans and militias had also left many of the facades pitted with bullet marks. Gasoline was sold by little boys with jerry cans and tin funnels, while down the road gas pumps at abandoned filling stations rusted and got stripped for parts. The skeletons of the Belgian Congo Free State whispered of the glory days in subtle mocking tones: one building along the boulevard still bore a faded billboard from a colonial-era insurance company. "[illegible] [illegible]," the sign suggested.

My casual routine ended on the fourth day, when Lendu warriors first appeared on the streets. I saw them walking down Lumumba Boulevard with a sickening swagger, drinking beer outside the gates of the Hotel Musafiri and getting stoned on the milky potions contained in ampoules that dangled from their bandoliers. They carried taped-up Kalashnikovs across their shoulders and slid their fingers across their throats as they passed young Hema girls. Some wore clear-plastic masks on their faces, sequined prom dresses that glittered in the sun, and punked-out yellow wigs on their heads.

Little by little, they took a piece of Bunia each time the sun went down. After it was all over, they would own a small piece of everyone who had been there, or leave what they had taken on the boulevard to rot in the equatorial sun. They had taken a piece of my interpreter, Johnny, when they murdered his father two years ago; they shot him in the back as he tried to run away during a raid north of town. His body had lain in the street for three days while Johnny hid in the bush.

I met Johnny my second morning in town, when I walked out of the dining room at the Takabeya and found him standing in the courtyard. Johnny had studied English at Bunia's run-down teacher-training college and lived in a dim, mildew-infested dormitory just behind the MONUC headquarters. After his father died, he'd paid his tuition and rent by pushing wheelbarrows of dried fish from Lake Albert to the Bunia market, a two-day haul through the mountains.

"I hope that you will be happy with my job," he said that day. "It's important to me. My father was a journalist, too."

I often spent mornings having tea with Brigadier General Kale Kayihura, commander of the Ugandan army in Congo. We'd sit under the shade of a small concrete building at the airport, where his men were stationed and gradually departing. What troubled the General most was how MONUC was preparing for his withdrawal. The first of 750 Uruguayan peacekeepers had begun trickling in on April 23, and MONUC seemed positive they could manage the war in the bush that was slowly creeping toward town. To house this colossal international force, the U.N. was flying in tons of cargo every day, erecting a giant prefab city of good intentions that would soon dwarf the town it was meant to help, a blue-and-white empire shuttled about in new Toyota SUVs that filled the streets and every parking lot.

MONUC could feed the people, but they certainly weren't intending to save them: the Security Council's mandate for MONUC permitted soldiers to protect only U.N. staff and property. The mandate had worked well for those areas of the country where the fighting had ceased. But in Ituri it would prove completely worthless. The blue flag of the U.N. cast little more than a shadow. The people were on their own, and few of them even knew it. This ugly paradox the U.N. refused to acknowledge: the Ugandans desperately needed to leave, but their presence was



Map by Anne Worku

lso preventing further massacres. Jgandans were dirty cops, but they ere the only law these people had. he General assured me, through a byrinth of twisted reasoning, that hisory would regard the Ugandans as heoes once MONUC failed and Bunia as awash in blood.



"Does the Security Council think bout the security in this region?" he sked me one day. "Their politics seem o be prevailing over human life."

"I'm so glad you're here as a witness," he added, something he'd say o me on every visit, squeezing my houlder.

I enjoyed speaking with General Kayihura because he wasn't afraid of ournalists, unlike the U.N. workers, who deflected my every approach as f I were a leper ("Call Kinshasa," hey'd tell me, passing the buck to MONUC's central headquarters). The General was good with questions if not answers.

"General, some people say your officers are stealing gold."

"*Stealing gold*. Nonsense. You've been here. Have you seen us stealing gold?"

"Personally, no, but . . ."

"What's with you Americans and Europeans?" He reached out and grabbed my wrist. "I've never understood why you people are so thin in the arms."

One morning I found the General pacing the runway as artillery echoed from the northern hills, near Rwampara. "We pulled our men out of there as the U.N. instructed," he said. "Now these Lendu are shooting civilians." He walked out past the tarmac into the high elephant grass. "You hear that? They're using a .50 caliber." He ordered two gun-mounted trucks toward the shooting, and a few minutes later the hills rumbled with mortar blasts and antiaircraft guns as the soldiers made contact.

One of his soldiers had just been shot through the chest while guarding a bridge north of town. "They stole his uniform," he said. "And then those Lendu cut out his tongue!" A voice crackled over the radio saying that the Lendu had been pushed from Rwampara. "Did I tell you that we found the head of one of our soldiers?" he continued. "It was lying in the bush. The rest of him had been eaten. I tell you these Lendu are like animals. They have no remorse!"

Just about then, a cargo plane touched down with one of the first groups of Uruguayan peacekeepers. They stepped out into the white afternoon sun and adjusted their eyes to the harsh light. A few already had on their pastel-blue flak jackets and clunky helmets. "The U.N. is sending these people into a trap," the General said.

"What business do these men have dying here?"

At the end of my first week, people started turning up dead. For three days in a row a different taxi driver was found either shot or hacked up in a ditch. A couple of days later I started getting regular visits at my hotel from Jean-Pierre, a short and boxy man who claimed to be a local journalist. He'd wear the same black suit and blue button-down shirt, and he carried a leather briefcase full of photos of dead bodies. Most were massacre victims, people lying in wooden coffins emptied of all their organs; people missing heads, arms, testicles. Each photo sold for about twenty dollars. One morning I was particularly interested in a shot of a guy sprawled in the road, his pond-water eyes staring blankly at the clouds. There was a gaping, sinewy gash in his neck from a machete blade.

"That is the taxi driver killed this morning," Jean-Pierre said. "Thirty dollars American."

"Thirty? Why thirty?"

"Monsieur, he is still lying in the road."

One morning my driver, Oliver, didn't show up at my hotel. I didn't hear from him all day and soon began to worry. After two days had passed I became scared that Oliver would show up in one of the photos in Jean-Pierre's briefcase. Late that afternoon, Johnny came by and said he'd just seen Oliver by the roundabout.

"So when is he coming?" I asked.

"Oliver said he won't be driving you anymore," Johnny said. "He's afraid the Lendu will kill him if he's seen driving a white man, a journalist."

Soon all of the taxi drivers stopped working, partly out of protest against their colleagues being killed, but mainly out of fear. There were few cars in Bunia, so without the motorcycles, the streets grew quiet and cryptic. Many people took this as a sign and just stayed home. Bunia began to feel like a town sentenced to death.

Steadily, the paranoia worked its way in. One night I sat at the Hellenique with two South Africans who claimed to be intelligence officers sent to monitor the Ugandan withdrawal. Unlike all other MONUC military staff, they didn't wear uniforms and were always vague about their "mission." They didn't have a vehicle, nor did they stay in rented homes or nicer hotels like other MONUC staff. They

Photograph © AP/Wide World Photos

stayed at the Takabeya, next door to me, endured the cold bucket baths and blackouts, and frequently invited the brassy wig-wearing women into their rooms. I liked them a lot.

The three of us sat on a bank of sofas in a dark corner, sharing a big bottle of Primus. The radio behind the bar crackled with Congolese love songs, and the lights flickered from Bunia's shaky current. A few tables were filled with MONUC's mostly Euro staff, in jeans and T-shirts, barking orders in French to Jean, the long-faced waiter, to bring their skewers of brochettes and plates of toasted cheese. The intelligence officers began talking about "the Conflict" in whispers, and I marveled at the things coming out of their mouths. That morning a woman working in the fields had been hacked in the head by a gang of Lendu. When I said the word "Lendu," one of the officers threw a finger in front of his lips and told me to quiet down.

"*Please*," he said, and motioned to a table of locals, all non-English speakers. "We only use the terms 'the H' and 'the L' when discussing the Conflict."

He surveyed the bar, then leaned in and whispered, "You never know who is listening. For instance, be careful around Jean the waiter. We're still not sure if he belongs to the H or the L."

Soon it became too dangerous even to leave the main boulevard at night. Hit-and-run gangs of Lendu teenagers were kicking down doors in the outer neighborhoods, robbing homes and raping women. The U.N. had banished the Ugandan soldiers from Bunia's streets and would often be called out to intervene during these home invasions.

One morning after a night of heavy shooting, two U.N. employees stood outside the Hellenique smoking cigarettes. One said he had been awakened that morning by a little girl pounding on his door.

"She said the Lendu were in her house and were about to kill her parents," the guy said. "What the fuck am I supposed to do? I called security to go check it out."

"We're not here to protect civilians," his friend snapped. "You can't save the world, mate. As far as I'm concerned, let the bastards kill each other."

He smiled, looked around and said, "Then what are we doing here?"

I began to wonder that about myself. During my last few nights in Bunia, I would lie in bed and count the gunshots and try to gauge how close they were to my door. At first I tried drinking myself to sleep, but that only made it worse. After a while I made a habit of packing my bag before going to bed in case I had to run out in a hurry. I'd already started switching hotels every few days and not telling anyone where I was staying.

Paranoia ruled; it engineered our thoughts and actions, guided our conversations and tucked us in at night. Contingency plans, evacuation rosters ("Who's on the U.N.'s evacuation list? Hey, journalist guy, have you seen the evacuation list? Was my name on it?"), and half-cocked theories about when and where the enemy would finally make its play—this was the repartee of frightened military men, hardened souls whose nightmares were cast with teenage boys in prom dresses quartering them in their beds.

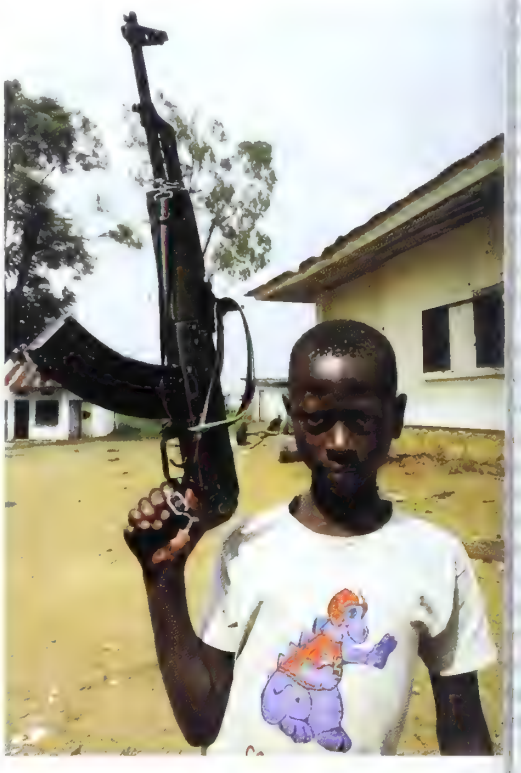
During these weeks a theory was circulating that we in Bunia held close and followed like gospel: that the gun boys, full of beer and howling for blood, never attacked before eleven in the morning, on weekends, or when it rained. This theory had held true so far, and it was certainly on my mind as I sat in the Internet café on Lumumba Boulevard. It was morning, a Saturday, and the sky was the color of lead and threatening rain.

*Three for three*, I thought. *In the clear.*

My emails to friends had grown cryptic and detached, sent out frozen and scattered like weather bulletins from the bughouse. Most were uncensored descriptions of what was taking place, benefiting only me in my effort to make sense of it.

"*Twelve shots last night, long rifle, closer to my hotel than before. . . . man found hanging from tree this morning, woman hacked up in a ditch. . . . Just another day in Paradise. Funny, huh?*"

I was sending my mother a standard "*I'm safe, gotta go . . .*" note when the manager of the café walked over to my computer, flipped the power, and shouted, "Go now, we're closed!" I looked up and saw that the other customers had moved into the next room by the tall windows. When I joined them I saw that the boulevard had suddenly filled with Lendu soldiers.



There were hundreds of them, more than I'd ever seen before. They carried their beat-up AK-47s and long spears with crude steel points that were chipped and jagged. One wore a 2-Pac T-shirt and a different sneaker on each foot. Many were barefoot and caked with the boulevard's yellow dirt; threads of clothing hung from their emaciated bodies. The fat old man next to me in the café looked horrified. From the expression on his face I guessed he was Hema. He strained to hear the Swahili words the boys were chanting in the streets, then turned to me. "They're saying it's time to pay."

After the last soldier passed the window, I ran outside with a few others. As we stood together at the edge of the



Photograph © Lucy Nicholson/REUTERS

npty boulevard, I saw more boys com-
ıg toward us. Someone said they were
lema soldiers coming to fight. As they
ɔt closer, we were suddenly surrounded
y a hail of gunshots. I turned to run as
ıree bullets smacked into the building
ehind me, kicking out puffs of dust
nd concrete. I wanted to hit the
round, but something propelled my
ɛgs forward. People came running
own the street as gunshots popped at
ıeir backs. They wore a crazy electric
nile on their faces, the same gimme-
anger grin you see on the faces of
eople who run with the bulls. I was
eaded back inside the café when a
oman in a yellow dress grabbed my
and and said, "You better hide. It's
ot safe for you here," and led me to a
ouse off the road.

We ducked into a ground-level
partment just behind the café, and
ıe closed the door. The living room
as dark, with thin shoots of sunlight
ascading through the curtains of a
earby window. Several other women
ıt on sofas and foldout chairs, whis-
ering soothing words to a few chil-
ren at their feet. The women were
eautiful, immaculately dressed in
right floral skirts, and smelled of strong
erfume. Their breezy French mixed
ith the rolling gunfire and was punc-
uated by cackling laughter and elabo-
ate hand gestures.

"This happens all the time," said
he woman in the yellow dress. She
oticed my leg trembling, gave a small
ugh, and said, "Are you afraid?" Then
he stood up, smoothed the wrinkles in
er dress, and disappeared into the
itchen to make tea.

I sat there for twenty minutes while
very thought in my head seemed to
orm and quickly blow apart until
here was nothing but gunfire and brief
apses of silence. At my feet two chil-
ren played like kittens on the floor.
ven as the fighting grew more in-
ense, as if someone were emptying a
lip in the bathroom, the children
ever made a sound.

The front door suddenly swung open,
ucking every bit of wind from my
ungs. But when I saw who it was, I
umped from the sofa and nearly kissed
im on the mouth. It was Johnny, sent
traight down on Heaven's rope from
he warm kitchens of my mother and
randmother. I'd given him the morn-
ing off, and now he was standing in the doorway, winded and smiling.

"I have a motorbike," he said. "Let's go."

We waited while the shooting moved down the street, then ran to the back of the house, where Johnny had stashed a Honda he'd borrowed from a striking taxi driver. I hopped on the back, and Johnny kicked the engine.

"Johnny, how'd you know I was there, man?"

"I just asked someone."

We lit down a back road, through leafy tea fields, and within seconds we were away from the shooting. Once safe, my panic melted away, and I began to laugh so hard I nearly fell off the bike.

So that's what it's like, I thought, the bang-bang, first contact and all that. I felt I should be more afraid, but for some reason there was a calm so crystal sharp that it spooked me. It certainly wasn't from bravery, but whatever it was, it left me with the cleanest, most vivid tunnel vision I'd ever experienced. It could have been a lot worse (weeks later, colleagues of mine would be pinned down on the same street as .50-caliber shells whizzed by inches from their heads). I knew that I'd been kissed with luck, saved by a rainy-day reserve of prayer and a woman I'd never met. But as we drove back to my hotel, the thing that kept running through my mind was, *Yes, yes. That's it exactly.*

Three days later, on May 6, the Ugandan army left Bunia for good. That same afternoon a band of Lendu fighters raided a Catholic mission north of town and slaughtered ten people in their rooms. One of them, a priest named Raphael Ngona, was my friend. The Lendu had Bunia by the throat the next morning, and by evening the town was carrion.

I managed to get a seat on the General's plane back to Kampala. I was apprehensive about leaving, but I simply didn't trust MONUC to protect me. I wondered what would happen to the people I had met, the hotel staff, the boy who sold me cigarettes on the street. Most of all, I worried about Johnny. Before I left for the airport I gave him a few packs of cigarettes, my French-English dictionary, cash, and a firm lecture on staying safe. "I'll be fine here," he said. "I have to stay for my school. And besides, where else can I go?"

The General had been sitting in the shade at the airport, watching his men load the last remaining gear into trucks and a few idle planes waiting on the runway. His face was pinched and exhausted. He'd come down with malaria the night before. "More reason for me to get out of this place!" he said. He stood up and paced awhile, then sat back down. "I just got a call saying these Lendu are on their way," he said. "What am I supposed to do? I wash my hands of this place. Let MONUC figure it out."

When the last soldier was ready to leave, we boarded a small twin-engine plane and the General sat alone. As the plane circled up and over Bunia, I looked down and saw the Lendu, like a column of ants, marching toward the town.

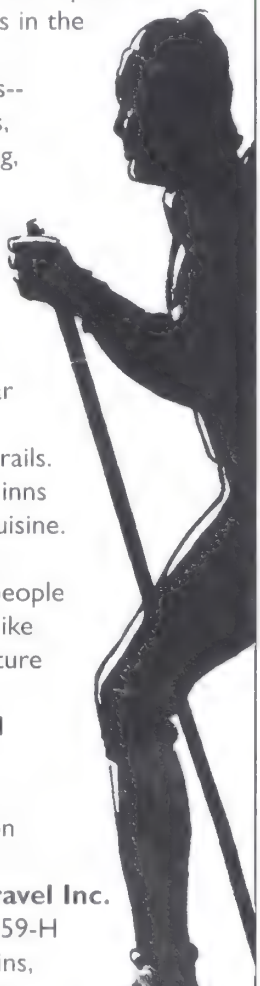
For the next several days the Lendu went from house to house looking for Hema. They painted their faces coal black and kicked down doors. They pulled families from their beds, from behind furniture, out of closets, then dragged them to the streets and shot them in the head. "Come out if you are Hema!" they screamed as they swept through bedrooms and over back fences. "The Lendu have come!"

When the killing was done, the young boys with their war faces howled and sang as they paraded down the empty boulevard waving the severed hands of the dead.

Then on May 12 there was a glimmer of hope. The Hema militia broke through the Lendu defenses and pushed them out of town. But as soon as the Hema had control of Bunia, they simply looted what was left of the town and started raping and killing Lendu civilians.

The first real lull in the fighting came on May 15, and it was then I found myself on the first available flight back into Bunia, with American missionaries headed back to evacuate church members. Half an hour after takeoff, our copilot, Mike, a handsome, leather-skinned missionary, walked out

# Hike the Alps.



Author/mountaineer Fred Jacobson leads special hiking trips in the Swiss and Italian Alps--Dolomites, Kandersteg, Merano, Sils Maria, Soglio, Sulden, and Zermatt. Spectacular scenery. Beautiful trails. Delightful inns and fine cuisine. For active outdoor people who also like their creature comforts. Our **32nd** summer! For free information contact:

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[illegible] and sighed so loud I could hear it over the engine noise. [illegible]

"They're sayin' it's still pretty rough down there," he shouted. "Lot of shooting this morning."

I pressed my forehead against the cool glass of the window and watched the clouds part to reveal the green rolling earth of eastern Congo. I couldn't believe I was going back. As the plane began its descent, I saw the familiar mud huts of Bunia town and slivers of smoke rising from breakfast fires. Mike then informed us that we were going to circle the airport—he was afraid the plane might get shot. Then he bowed his head and led us in prayer.

At the airport I grabbed my backpack and ran toward a sea of U.N. military hardware and people clamoring to leave. The tarmac was choked with chalk-white armored personnel carriers, mountains of sandbags, and dozens of Uruguayan peacekeepers. The sun was white hot, and my tongue was dry and swollen.

Mahmadou Bah, a MONUC press officer, ran up and grabbed my hand. "Don't go anywhere," he shouted over the din of departing planes. "The road's not safe. We'll have to take you in under guard."

I saw another familiar face near the terminal building—it was Juan, one of the Uruguayan peacekeepers I'd met at the Hellenique a few weeks before. When we met, he'd just returned from a long observation mission in the bush with only one other soldier. They'd been given no weapon. While alone in the bush, Juan told me, he'd seen his own death, and he went to bed every night with it playing in his mind. He was now on his way out, his green duffel resting at his feet. God knows what his week had been like. I flapped my arms in the air and screamed his name.

Juan saw me, hiked his bag over his shoulder, and sprinted over. Before I could even say hello, he tossed the bag onto the tarmac and embraced me in a powerful bear hug. When he pulled back, I looked into his eyes; it was like staring into the ocean. Without saying a word, he grabbed his bag, ran to a waiting C-130 cargo plane, and disappeared inside.

I walked back to the terminal and watched Mike help a group of ol women and young children board th plane. Then I watched it leave.

I got a ride with a convoy of ai workers behind a fast-moving U.N. ar mored personnel carrier. Before pullin out of the airport, the driver told me t prepare myself for what I was about t see. "It's all gone," he said. "They' destroyed it all." The first place w passed was my old hotel, the CAPA where I had spent my last night Through the gates I could see the doo kicked open and garbage strewn acro the parking lot. Six teenagers sat ou front smoking cigarettes, each on cradling a Kalashnikov across his la And when we finally turned onto Lu mumba Boulevard, the lifeline of th town, I sank in my seat.

The shops along the boulevar were gutted shells: doors busted o hinges, windows raked with bull holes, heaps of trash spilling out entrances. Wooden kiosks had bee turned on their sides and smashed splinters. The gravel on the road w stained with greasy black circles fro burning tires.

The boulevard now belonged to th young Hema fighters. They wore ba gy army jackets over scrappy T-shir and grimy blue jeans. A small group them gathered outside a deserted sho laughing at a joke someone had tol Farther down the road, one of the walked out of a shop carrying a loote office chair over his head. As w passed, he cocked his chin in our d rection and grinned. I caught his e and felt my face start to burn.

The Lendu had overrun the U.N peacekeepers almost immediately. A soon as the Lendu stormed the tow the U.N. soldiers retreated to prote their base. Three days into the batt for Bunia's streets, one of the tw groups (it's not clear exactly who) a tacked the U.N. headquarters with a tillery, including two mortar roun that screamed into the compound an exploded in the yard. When I arrive the MONUC headquarters looked li a maximum-security prison. The squ concrete fence surrounding the buil ing had been crowned with a silv mantle of razor wire. Five armored v hicles sat parked outside the gate li a row of stones, set between two ba ricades of more wire and steel. A doz

armed Uruguayan soldiers stood guard, their faces as weathered and broken as the town.

During the fighting, people had fled their houses and amassed outside the MONUC gates, only to find that MONUC had locked them out. To escape the shelling, some attempted to run headlong through the wall of razor wire. A woman so desperate to get inside tossed her baby over the wire, then barreled through herself. They were both ripped to shreds. When the people realized that MONUC had no intention of protecting them, they rioted. Stones and garbage were hurled at the building. A corpse was tossed over the fence. Tires were set ablaze in the boulevard, and roadblocks were erected from rubble and large rocks. This lasted two days, until the mob grew bigger and stronger and finally crashed the gates. Once they were inside, MONUC had no choice but to distribute plastic sheeting, medicine, and food. Four thousand of them now lived around the headquarters in a space the size of a city block. Aid groups like UNICEF, Oxfam, and German Agro Action were feeding them high-protein biscuits and trying desperately to repair the town's water main, which was cut during the fighting. There was already an outbreak of cholera.

Since all the hotels had been destroyed and were occupied by gunmen, I slept at the headquarters. Every inch of floor inside the building was taken by staff, so my group of journalists got put outside with the displaced. We set up our tents and sleeping bags on the side of the building under a large tarp. We were fenced in by a snaking coil of razor wire, and just beyond it the edge of the displaced camp began. Nearest us, several middle-aged women hovered over small charcoal burners cooking pots of rice. A group of kids sat around them pitching bottle caps.

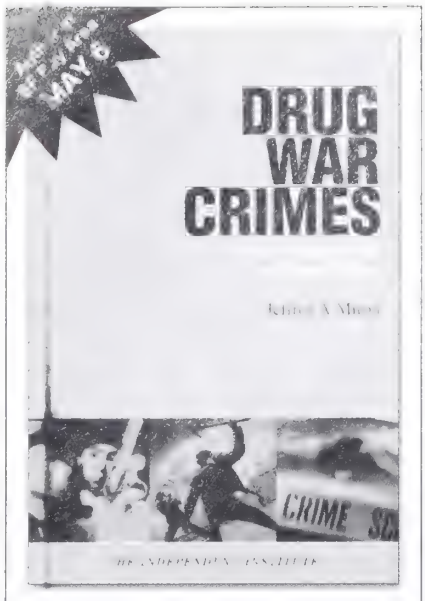
As I unpacked, I looked up and noticed our neighbors staring at us through the wire. I didn't know how to interpret their gaze, but it wasn't friendly. It was cold and hollow, and I was getting it even from the children. Not knowing what else to do, I waved. Then I looked down and noticed our collective inventory of junk scattered across the dirt: satellite phones and computers, generators, cases of water, canned meats, gourmet cheese, an espresso maker, whiskey, chocolate bars, and cartons of cigarettes. Ashamed, I quickly gathered my own things, crammed them back into my bag, and hurried off.

When I stepped out from under the tarp, I saw Johnny walking across the grass. A rush of relief swept over me. "You're okay," I shouted, and threw my arms around him. Johnny didn't own a phone, and during the siege I'd worried about him every day. "Things are not so good," he said. "I can't go home. They took everything I had."

The Lendu had ransacked his room at the campus and stolen what few things he owned. During the first day of fighting, he had been trapped in a house near the market while Lendu carried out their killings in the streets. When he finally made it home a week later, a family had invaded his dorm and taken over. He was now living in the displaced camp and trying to find work with journalists.

While we stood in the grass, John-




**US Drug War Index**

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual government expenditure | $33,000,000,000 |
| Americans arrested each year on drug charges | 1,500,000 |
| Americans in prison for drug offenses | 318,000 |

The official claim is that prohibition deters drug use and reduces crime. In ***Drug War Crimes***, Boston University economist Jeffrey Miron conducts a balanced and sophisticated investigation of this claim and of the true costs and consequences of the "War on Drugs." His concise analysis reveals disturbing findings and points to real solutions.

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"Miron offers a powerful economic analysis detailing the irrationality of using criminal law to prohibit drugs. He offers an equally powerful explanation of the terrible human harm caused by the drug war and advances the only practical alternative to the present failed policies."

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San Jose, CA and Kansas City, MO

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my friend my aid worker his name I'm forgetting should be. He was [illegible] his face looked beyond exhausted. "I saw them do it," he said. "I never believed it was true, but when I was hiding I saw them kill an old man and eat from his heart. I saw them do it."

An emergency hospital ward was set up in one of the deserted buildings across the street from the U.N. headquarters. I waited as long as I could before going over, because I already knew what I would find: the sharp, musty smell of a room full of septic wounds; the dead glaze over the eyes of a kid coming to terms with the fact that he no longer had legs, the way they stared straight through you so that you averted your eyes even though you still asked questions; the emptiness you felt as you hurried out the door and stepped back into the sun that was much brighter than you remembered.

In one bed was a young woman named Neema. She lay there unconscious, her body sprawled sideways across one of the foam mattresses in the center of the cement floor. Her arms were spread at her sides, and the top of her head was wrapped in a crown of bandages. Neema had been giving birth in a clinic down the road during the first hours of fighting. Just as her baby was delivered, a mortar round hit the roof and rained shrapnel through the ceiling of her room. The baby survived, but Neema's brains had to be scooped back into her head.

I stared at her for a long time, perhaps five minutes, trying to understand how she could even be alive. As I stood there, Neema began to move, at first just her lips, then a twitch in her cheeks. Then her body began to writhe on the bed. Her palms slapped the concrete and she emitted a guttural moan, as if lashing out against a nightmare. I realized that she was saying something—it was in Lingala, and I couldn't make out the words. "What's this woman saying?" I asked one of the doctors, a weary-looking older man standing nearby. He walked over, and we watched Neema together. "'I'm dying,'" he said, and turned to see my reaction. "She needs a neurosurgeon desperately. But there's just no way. She will probably die."

Neema's baby had been taken to a house next to the Hellenique. One afternoon a good friend of mine, Helen Vesperini, a battle-tested reporter with Agence France-Presse, walked inside and discovered the baby languishing on a sofa, getting fed powdered milk once a day. The incident haunted her for the duration of our trip. Finally, mortified, she drew up adoption papers and told the doctor she was taking the baby home.

Neema's story haunted me as well. There'd been dozens of people with ghastly wounds in the ward that day, but every time I passed the hospital I thought only of her. I started making excuses to myself to visit the hospital just to see her. I stood at a distance, pretending to look for someone in her direction, or I just leaned against the far wall and studied her face. Sometimes there was a serene rapture to it, almost a smile. Other times it was full of spirits. Her eyebrows would lift as if she were about to sneeze, but from the bottom of her stomach came a low cry that built to a peak, then faded to a heavy pant, leaving her face slack. The sound of her voice stayed in my head like the verse of a bad song that kept forcing its way to the surface and repeating.

It was Neema I saw whenever I passed the kids carrying their guns in the streets. She became a symbol of my hatred for them. I didn't even know if they were the ones to blame for what happened, but it didn't matter. If it wasn't Neema, then it was some other young mother, an old man, a three-year-old kid who just happened to be there when one of those cowboys decided to pull a trigger. For two weeks I'd sat in Bunia while the Lendu became our devils and executioners. Yet with just a slight turn of events, the Hema kids had replaced them. I looked for something better in the new raw recruits, a sign that they harbored a greater purpose, a moral rectitude that transcended cannibals, rapists, and thieves. But they didn't, and I despised them for it.

"I'll tell you what we need," a MONUC worker told me one night. He was former military and had come to Congo with noble, pure intentions

ıt he had quickly become a hard-
ıed, bitter man. We'd sit on the front
eps of the MONUC headquarters
ɔping warm bottles of beer, and he'd
ten tell me things in strict confi-
ɛnce for fear of losing his job. During
ıe attack, Lendu fighters had stopped
s truck and shoved a gun barrel up
s nose. An arrow had even sailed
ırough his driver-side window and
uck in the passenger seat, narrowly
issing him. Once, he said, a kid stood
the road with his gun leveled, so he
t the gas and ran over him with his
uck. "I'll tell you what we need," he
id, drunk, with a face as ungiving
stone. "We need an army that can
ɔme in here and kill off an entire
ɛneration of these fuckers. I mean,
hat are they gonna grow up to be
anyway? These kids are
worse than animals."

I'll show you the body," said the
ɔung boy now running ahead of me.
had heard there was a corpse on the
ɔad near the MONUC compound,
ɔ I ventured out to investigate. The
ɔy and his two friends, all three around ten years old, had raced ahead as any kid would've done when there was a dead body to look at. I knew we were getting close, because the smell hit my throat and hung there. The boys gathered by the side of the road and stared into the ditch, leaning over as if held back by an invisible railing. "It's here," said one of them, pointing down. I saw a black, pulsing mass that erupted in a swarm of flies as I got closer. It was the body of a boy, I think, and the entire lower half of him had been eaten by dogs.

Bunia was full of dogs. I'd never really noticed them before, but now I saw them everywhere. They scurried in and out of open shops and slept in the awning shade. And wherever there was a pack of dogs, there was usually a body nearby.

I'd first noticed them when a few colleagues and I took a walk one day to a village called Yambi Yaya, two miles south, which had been emptied by the fighting. In Yambi's abandoned market area, about six bodies lay sprawled in the red dirt road. We chased several dogs from around the body of a young girl, around fifteen years old, who lay flat on her back in front of a small, concrete house. There were no signs of machete wounds or bullet holes; it looked as if she had just walked outside and fallen dead in her steps.

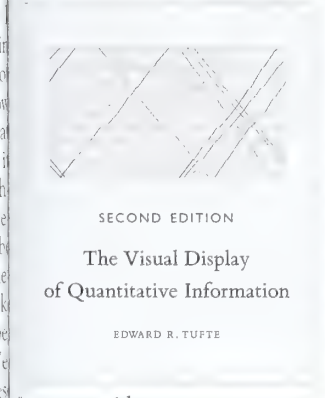
One of the girl's legs twisted out from a pink dress; the other had been chewed off at the knee. As we got closer to the girl, I saw something that made my skin suddenly go cold. Five yellow ducklings were gathered at the base of her knee, picking at the flesh.

Even weeks later some of the same guys, steely correspondents, would stop whatever they were doing, look up, and mutter, "Ducks, man. *Fucking ducks.*"

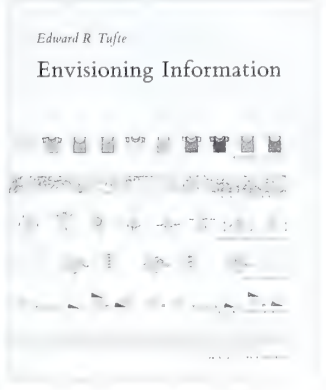
Soon after the trip into Yambi, I started to check out. I was in the close company of murderers, cannibals, child killers, thieves, and rapists. But unlike in the States, where those dark human tendencies are usually hidden from view, these criminals were walking free like gang lords. The same men commanding these boys who gutted human beings


*Edward Tufte's books on analytical design (and essay on PowerPoint)*

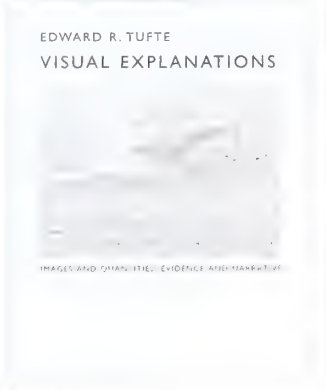
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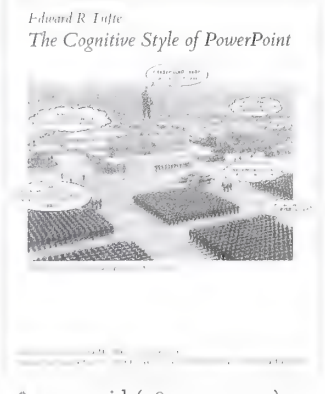

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like fish and ate their organs, who strung human kidneys across their bandoliers and raped children in broad daylight, sat in the Hellenique that week drinking on the U.N.'s tab. (Further attempts at "pacification," MONUC had claimed.) Bunia became a world without second thought, a [illegible] good anymore.

The [illegible] than ever. The same day we'd seen the bodies in Yambi, we were in Bunia's emptied market interviewing a ten-year-old Hema soldier when, mid-sentence, the kid suddenly flipped out on two women he saw looting a shop. His eyes filled with feral rage, and he began beating them with the barrel of his gun; we threw ourselves to the ground, certain the kid was about to spray his clip. A friend of mine who was with me, Karel Prinsloo, a veteran war photographer with the AP, later summed up our fear perfectly. "Put me in Gaza any day, man," he said. "At least there I know where I fucking stand."

I reached the turning point that afternoon while walking to the little makeshift market near the U.N. headquarters. (Everything that had been looted was then sold back to the people for a higher price.) On the way I passed several militia mugging for a knot of news photographers. One of them proudly thrust out his chest and displayed his Osama bin Laden T-shirt. Next to him was a teenage girl, tall and beautiful with a model's smile, wearing a floppy leather hat and a chain of bullets across her chest. In one hand she tossed a grenade in the air as if it were an apple.

Back at the camp, things were tense. A few Lendu had been caught sneaking in, attempting to settle old vendettas. A kid was caught with a grenade, and a couple of people had been stabbed. MONUC was cutting back its food rations, and people were getting angry. ("We're trying to get the people to return to their homes," a MONUC staffer told me. "But they'll be killed," I replied.)

I sat down on a milk crate while the others quietly filed their stories. I tried to read a book, but I couldn't concentrate. Some woman was [illegible] in the camp [illegible]. At first I brushed it off, then realized she was screaming at us. I looked up and saw that she was practically through the razor wire, pointing her finger at each of us. The veins bulged from her neck, and her eyes were wide and full of hate. What she screamed was in Lingala, so I never knew what she actually said. But her sentences were punctuated with "*journaliste*! *journaliste*!" and I soon got the message.

I didn't care anymore. I just wanted her to shut up. I wanted to grab her by the collar, look her in the eyes, and tell her I was just doing my job, that this wasn't my fault, ask her to please *shut the hell up and STOP BEING SO GODDAMN PITIFUL!*

I walked out onto the grass and found a spot to lie down. It wasn't seeing the suffering Congolese that chipped away at me, but the way they took their beatings, the way they woke up every day to viciousness and abuse and still sang songs while they walked down the road. I guess the woman in the camp finally got tired of singing.

The tenacity of the Congolese both impressed and confused me. Here children rarely cried and mothers never wailed over dead children in the presence of others. One man described to me how Lendu fighters had tossed his six-month-old baby in the air and sliced her in half with a machete. How they then rounded up the rest of his kids and butchered them. He'd watched it all from his window, yet when he told the story you'd have thought he was recounting something he'd read in a newspaper.

War and death had become life. "This happens all the time," the woman in the yellow dress had said to me during the gun battle. War and ravage were constants. Disease was always lurking, hunger was something that just happened. They lived with it because it's all they knew. Here, people just died.

I thought of this as dozens of white U.N. Land Cruisers passed by, as their massive logistics base was being built near the airport, as their staff drank beer all day in the Hellenique, as their cargo planes landed every day loaded with photocopiers, steamrollers, forklifts, guns and ammo, lumber and steel beams, and I wondered if the same charade would work in, say, Cincinnati if five hundred people had been murdered that week, their bodies desecrated in the streets, while the world's hired peacekeepers were forced to retreat to their compound.

It all seemed so ridiculous. I thought about Johnny and Neema and this town I'd grown attached to, only to see it gutted and destroyed. For what? There'd been no struggle, no rage against a despot, no noble sacrifice for a greater cause, for anything. There was only hate and boredom and lust for power—temporary, fleeting power. The point of it all was that there was no point. People just died, and they died for nothing.

For the next hour I lay in the grass, letting the hot sun sting my face. I closed my eyes and drifted off to sleep, hoping to wake up just as a plane landed to take me home, anywhere but Bunia town.

*Epilogue: I returned to Bunia several more times in the summer of 2003, then as a reporter for the Associated Press. In June the European Union deployed a 1,100-strong rapid-reaction force to Bunia, led by the French army. The E.U. force had a shoot-to-kill mandate and were quickly able to quell the violence. Humanitarian organizations moved in with food and medicine and enabled thousands to return home. On July 28, the U.N. Security Council voted to give its soldiers a mandate to protect civilians and by November had sent in 4,300 additional troops. Bunia remains relatively calm, but attacks on Hema villages continue in the remote areas of the province.*

*Johnny continued to live in the displaced camp throughout the summer and eventually returned to his room on campus. With the tide of international press in Bunia during those months, Johnny became everyone's favorite translator; he later worked as a stringer for the AP. As of October, Neema was still alive but severely brain damaged; she slowly recovers. My colleague completed the adoption papers, and Neema's baby now lives happily in Kigali, Rwanda. As for the woman in the yellow dress, I never saw her again.*

# TO BBC OR NOT TO BBC

## Independent journalism suffers an identity crisis

*By Nicholas Fraser*




It was a miserable dark London day when Lord Hutton finally delivered his report dealing with the death of the government's scientific adviser, Dr. David Kelly, who killed himself after leaking information to the BBC. Dressed in undertaker's gray, speaking with the half-suppressed brogue of his native Ulster, Judge Hutton cast a chill over the Ikea-bright courtroom. Most people had expected that the judge would be more or less evenhanded in his allocation of blame, but Hutton exonerated the government. Minute by minute the judge unpacked his findings against the BBC. The original radio story, the work of Andrew Gilligan, a BBC investigative reporter, the judge concluded, was sloppily researched and poorly phrased. Gilligan had analyzed the content of a dossier used by the Blair government to persuade the British public that a war against Iraq was necessary. The now infamous government claim that weapons of mass destruction could be used by the Iraqis within forty-five minutes of an order being given, Gilligan reported, was inserted late in the drafting of the document with the knowledge that it was probably false. He further alleged that the government had "sexed up" the dossier against the express wishes of those working in intelligence. Hutton dismissed all these allegations—"unfounded" was the word he used—making it clear that he didn't believe the reporter's account of his meeting with Dr. Kelly. He found the BBC guilty of poor editorial controls and of complacency when it came to responding to complaints. All he could find to say against the Blair government in 328 dense pages was that poor Dr. Kelly should have been notified when the decision was made to allow journalists to guess his identity, rewarding them when they gave the right answer.

Blair likes to address Parliament as if composing a new tableau to be hung adjacent to the pseudo-medieval artworks that decorate the Mother of Parliaments: KING TONY ADDRESSES THE UNRULY BARONS OF THE REALM. His speech following Lord Hutton's judgment was more impassioned, harsher in tone, and it was wholly devoid of charm. Blair wanted his enemies at the BBC to go, and both its chairman, Gavyn Davies, and its director general, Greg Dyke, resigned in the days that followed. But he made the appeal as an injured individual, not as a powerful politician who had just taken his country into an unpopular war. Righteous, a telltale quaver entering his voice, he sounded like the barrister in Terence Rattigan's *The Winslow Boy*, defending a fourteen-year-old boy from the charge of having

*Nicholas Fraser is a contributing editor of* Harper's Magazine. *He commissions international documentaries for the BBC.*

Illustration by Steve Brodner

formances? Surely not, yet here
more than ready to pursue his own pri-
BBC
would have been happier if the BBC

Few reporters in Britain can remain immune to the existence of the BBC,
ily accessible, censors were very important people. It was they, by determining what could or couldn't be said, who established some sort of accepted standard for information. Acquaintance with interdicted texts gave them a cosmopolitan outlook, and I can recall many discussions about free speech with censors, mostly in the old communes of the Eastern bloc. But the BBC, too, had its own censors. When I first went to work at the BBC, sometime in the 1970s, I visited a tweeded individual in a remote office out of *1984*. I was eager to make many provocative shows for the BBC and told him so. My mentor gave me a slim booklet with a green cover. Here I was informed, genteelly and in civil service prose, that in the BBC one should be impartial and fair-minded, always tell the truth, and be careful to submit one's expenses on time and in triplicate. Faced with doubt about the wisdom of revealing a fact, one must consult with one's superiors. "Never say you want to make programs at the BBC," my mentor intoned. "Just say you want to work for the BBC." When I was able to reassure him that I had never belonged to a Communist organization, he nodded, as if to say, "Good chap." For many years I struggled with these instructions. What, I asked myself, does "impartiality" mean? Is it always appropriate, even when confronted with the vilest specimens of mankind, to be "fair" in the style of a cricket umpire? Each book written by a BBC man or

Newspeak—was Orwell's tribute to a place where he was censored but which he nonetheless loved. It would be too much to say that I learned to love censor
Smith, I survived.

Times have changed, and the red chairs
ering dust. Except among the bearded ulema, the religious police of Saudi Arabia, or perhaps somewhere within the dynastic collectivism of North Korea, overt censorship is out of fashion these days. No head of state, whatever the condition of the local dungeons, will fail to express a belief in open government, and no well-meaning celebrity will miss the opportunity to attend this year's Amnesty International awards. But Blair's intervention told me that the belief in free expression is no more rooted in reality than it was when Voltaire pestered Frederick the Great about being enlightened. Everybody loves freedom of speech—so long as it can happen elsewhere. Governments, like individuals, have become, to use an Anglo-American expression usually applied to those opposing the construction of adjacent unsightly buildings, "Nimbyists"—they believe in free expression when their own back yards are not affected. Where their interests are threatened, they will go to some lengths to defend themselves. The same goes for the private corporations which have in part taken the place of governments, and which now own newspapers and TV stations. For the ultimate Nimby, nothing exists outside one's own right to say what one wants and to be protected from those who say bad things. This was the attitude taken by Courtney Love a few years ago, when she presented a Torch of Liberty VOLO award to Miloš Forman, director of a film about the pornographer Larry Flynt (in which she had starred as Flynt's wife), while attempting to deter journalists who wished to write about herself or her dead husband, Kurt Cobain. At heart Love and Courtney are Nimbies.

But I notice, too, that the end of censorship hasn't introduced an era of

happiness. Poll after poll reveals that
the media are trusted less—though
either to have their own "bias" (liber
al or anti-liberal, left or right, etc.) o
merely to be out for themselves. Jour-
nalists and politicians hate each oth
er just as much as they ever did. It is
harder for politicians, who are notori-
ously less good with words, to find a
way of publicly expressing the dislike
they feel for their tormentors. They
are reduced to blaming journalists for
their cynicism—an accusation that
leads naturally to the retort that it is
the politicians who are the true cynics.
After the long, post-Watergate mo-
ment, the pursuit of scoops is now con-
sidered to be vulgar in circles in which
the higher purposes of journalism are
discussed. This is the lawyer and mil-
itary theorist Philip Bobbitt, sound-
ing just like the old, long-gone censors:

> The press and electronic media, far
> more than the drab press releases of any
> government, are the engines of mass
> propaganda today. . . . [T]he ideology of
> media journalism is the ideology of con-
> sumerism, presentism, competition, hy-
> perbole (characteristics evoked in it
> readers and watchers)—as well as skep-
> ticism, envy, and contempt (the reac-
> tions it rains on government officials).

Who takes such tirades seriously? Who
indeed cares anymore whether politi-
cians are insulted or not? Among prac-
titioners, the new rules of the game are
easily understood. The first and mos
important one derives from the notion
that everything significant—not just a
patented process or product but a rep
utation—belongs exclusively to it
owner, who has a moral obligation to
take action when property rights are
affected. The second arises from the
copious availability of information ove
the Internet and elsewhere, and it state
that where there is so much informa
tion it cannot much matter whether
every single item is actually true. The
third rule states that almost everythin
coming from a politician or a journal
ist will instantly be forgotten. With
holding facts, distorting them, is wha
any prudent person or insti
tution will do.

Zip around the world with thes
simple maxims, and one can see tha
free-speech Nimbyism is installe

erywhere. Think of Rupert Murch a few years ago, when he first claimed satellite TV as a means of stroying totalitarianism, and soon er, when the Chinese government jected to a show featuring Mao's x life, ejected the BBC from his ar satellite service. No one expects ything else from Rupert, but we e pleased to learn that the Chinese e now ready to open up their TV rvice to foreign suppliers so long as e shows are not in conflict with rty doctrine. On the other side of e world, Venezuelan president ugo Chávez conducts his own eekly review of the press on state levision, trashing his opponents en as he reiterates his own belief free expression. Chávez claims surior moral authority to his enemies n the grounds that they were happy shut down the state TV station r the fourteen-odd hours they were control of the country, whereas he o doubt because he cannot silence em) allows his enemies to broadst insults. Now go to Serbia, where obodan Milosevic stayed in power r eleven years without any formal achinery of censorship. Opponents press and TV were silenced by a one call. One small local radio ation was allowed to continue oadcasting critical stories throughit the life of the regime—so that ese could be picked up and broadst elsewhere, allowing Milosevic to aim that he permitted freedom of eech. From his glass box in The ague, however, Slobo poses as a ronged defender of Serb freedoms.

In Russia the arrival of any freedoms, en highly restricted ones, has proved aumatic: 130 journalists have been urdered since 1991, and in no more an a handful of these cases has a killer en brought to justice. Togliatti, an dustrial center southeast of Moscow, as witnessed the murder of two editors the same newspaper in just over a ar. The man accused of one of the urders is acknowledged to be innont. Newspapers not sympathetic to ie government find it difficult to disibute copies outside Moscow, and ould-be sponsors of opposition to the overnment are stopped on the tarmac Siberia and detained indefinitely on harges of tax evasion. Because most Russians get their news from television, the government has taken some pains to make sure that TV news coverage conforms to its requirements. At election time candidates are given one hour of free airtime to expound their views. Putin, who refuses to debate his opponents, is magnanimously willing to surrender his allocation, because his doings are covered Soviet-style in minute detail in every broadcast. "If I were not loyal to Mr. Putin, I would not work here," explains the director general at Vesti, the news program of a major state-owned channel. Russians may consult the Internet and read about abuses of democracy throughout the world, but it remains hard for them to know what is going on in their own country. "I don't see why I can be accused of suppressing press freedoms," Putin blandly tells a student at Columbia University. "Russia has no history of such things."

Everywhere television proves to be a less reliable defender of freedoms than was the old-fashioned press. In



Silvio Berlusconi's Italy it is no longer thought necessary or even desirable that politicians should tell the truth. Those who dissent from that maxim will not find employment, at least in television, which Berlusconi controls, directly or otherwise. A system almost as complete, and more effective because of the illusions in which it is applied, exists in France. Here an elaborate ritual is observed whereby politicians and television executives concur, often without needing to consult each other, in what should or should not be said on TV. Sex scandals are off-limits as a consequence of the privacy laws. Not wholly to my surprise, a BBC show I made exposing the murky aspects of Jacques Chirac's past is considered too rich for the tastes of the French public. This is not because the Great Man's periodic weaknesses are unknown (those involving the illicit funding of party politics with public money recently caused Chirac's chief associate to be debarred from politics for ten years), or because anyone bothers anymore to deny their existence. Half French, having worked in Paris for long spells, I remain mystified by the adaptability of this French *ancien régime*. It seems to tell me that given the opportunity to choose freedoms, human beings will always construct defenses against them in the name of civilization. A guest on a Paris TV show explains to me that one must interrogate politicians in a spirit of proper deference. "Good taste is always best," he observes.

In 1944, cleaning out his kitchen cupboard as the V-bombs came over London, George Orwell happened upon an eight-year-old copy of the *Daily Mirror*. He wasn't surprised to find so many pieces about seaside murders and peers' secret weddings and "an idealised photograph of the man the Conservative Party were to sack like a butler a year later." Orwell noticed the topics that were not covered—anything to do with the world going to hell in places like Abyssinia or nearby Spain—and he attributed these failings, characteristically, to the greed of newspaper proprietors combined with readers' need for a "sunshine mentality." Freedom of Expression prizes are given to those working in less fortunate parts of the world, and the assumption, fortified by the earnest, somewhat patronizing speeches and the chardonnay, is that no sparrow can fall without the attention of rolling news. Nonetheless, Orwell's observations are not so far off the mark. Who recalls the notorious "CNN effect"—the worries expressed by politicians (and even by newscasters) about the way in which the coverage of atrocities in the Balkans or Rwanda might lead to misguided humanitarian policies? Global news reporting is patchy and highly selective, one atrocity blocking out another. Even terrorism, so adroitly formulated for the benefit of rolling news, loses its impact rapidly.

Spin is supposed to be an Anglo-Saxon invention, and much has been written about its practice. What these accounts usually leave out is how relatively simple it is to distort information if no one cares very much about the truth. "You don't need to muzzle sheep," a British politician once said about wartime censorship. There was no censorship during the Iraq war, because it wasn't needed. In America (and on Fox TV in particular) the tone was moronically celebratory, in the shameless style adopted by William Randolph Hearst's men when covering their nasty little wars. CNN, anodyne and corporate-sounding in the style of a new Voice of America, proved not to be immune to the spirit of jingo. The BBC shambled along the middle ground, trying and not always managing to be impartial—a posture for which it was reviled by patriots in the United States and at home. (Notoriously, the perception of TV news depends on who is actually watching. Tony Blair found the BBC style obnoxiously antiwar, but the British public, asked to compare the coverage with that of rivals, considered the BBC "most pro-war.") Things look different in *Control Room*, a new documentary which views the war from the vantage point of Al Jazeera in Doha. Here is the real violence of the war, and here, too, captured through the incredulity of Al Jazeera's editors and reporters, is the core perverseness of the allied project of liberation—the axiom that one must invade a country killing a number of civilians, in order to introduce enlightenment and democracy. When I ask him about the quality of coverage, an Al Jazeera journalist trained at the BBC is scathing. "The war coverage for the West looks as if it has been censored, even if this is not the case. We need the West's media to set an example to our own, censored media, otherwise we cannot survive," he explains. "But what happens when Western reporting is as bad as the worst Arab reporting?"

Lies are what any self-respecting hack expects to uncover, and I reflect that Tony Blair, who cares so much about telling the truth, is these days known in Britain as "Bliar." Living in truthlessness is what we all, willy-nilly, do, and I begin to wonder about whether something like the BBC, formally dedicated as it is to the pursuit of truth, can ever survive. Is it, as I have always assumed, a half-good deed without which the world would be poorer? Or is it the arrogant, mendacious, neo-feudal barony that dominates the imagination of its many enemies? "Nation shall speak peace unto nation," is the motto of the British Broadcasting Corporation variously known as "the Beeb," "the Corporation," or, simply and affectionately, "Auntie." A state-licensed monopoly, funded by a compulsory tax (it comes to around $180 a year paid by each household with a color TV set—black-and-white is cheaper) the nonpayment of which is punishable by jail, the BBC should have become the Ministry of Truth. That it never did, and that it instead came to serve as a model for public broadcasting all over the world, is one of the many important oddities of twentieth-century Britain. With its 28,000 employees, its world and domestic radio, its online presence, and its eight TV channels guaranteed by an annual income of nearly $6.5 billion, the BBC dwarfs its commercial competitors, with the exception of Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV satellite service. (In a characteristically British compromise, the BBC World Service, which airs on National Public Radio, is funded by the British

vernment, whereas the television
ws, which is shown on PBS and
the cable channel BBC America,
s to pay for itself.) From its birth
ghty-two years ago, however, the
BC has never been popular with
liticians. Churchill reviled its
unding director general, the aus-
re Presbyterian John Reith, when
e latter refused to turn the BBC
er to the government during the
26 National Strike. The BBC re-
onded by keeping Churchill far
ay from the airwaves when he was
otesting against the appeasement
Hitler. Although the BBC is still
vered for its ability to transmit
ore or less truthful propaganda dur-
g the Second World War, its fracas
th the government of the day dur-
g the 1956 Suez crisis caused last-
g damage. Politicians pay lip ser-
ce to the BBC's independence
om political controls even while
rsing its obduracy. For its part, the
BC talks long and loud about its
dependence even while it strives
make some sort of common cause
th the government of the day.

It is hard to say which is worse for
e BBC: a powerful government or
ne with no power at all. It looked
r some time as if Mrs. Thatcher
ould destroy the BBC; only her
vn prudence kept her back, and the
ct that she and many of her follow-
s still watched BBC comedies like
s *Minister*. The BBC was safe dur-
g John Major's catastrophic regime
the 1990s, but it was accused con-
antly of abetting the opposition. By
nd large, BBC employees vote to
e left or for the center, and Tory
itics never tire of depicting cabals
BBC lefties. In reality the BBC
ust always strive to balance mild
dicalism in taste or politics against
e pervasive conservatism of middle-
ass taste. It has had much practice
seeming to occupy the middle
ound. But there are moments when
ne BBC appears to behave different-
, moving as swiftly as an organiza-
on so ponderous can do, and one of
these was the arrival to
power of Blair in 1997.

The day after Blair came to pow-
, people walked through the long,
tabby corridors of the BBC with a


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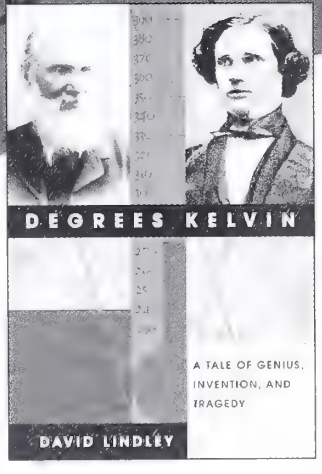
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ment about the BBC's impartiali
relations between Downing Str
and the BBC became glacial. It wa
enemies, indulging in daily, more
less open conflict, that the BBC
Downing Street now confronted e
other. After the war, neither the B
nor the government could br
themselves to apologise. It was in
context of bitter, unappeased host
that Dr Kelly went for his attern
walk in the Oxfordshire countrys

sat down under a
and slit his wrist

What do we expect from t
media? Do they invariably attemp
tell us the truth? Is it the case
many now suggest, that they h
come to be a substitute for civic
tiepation, merely creating a cu
of news junkies? These are quest
carelessly hashed over by acade
but for some weeks last summer
could see them applied to real lif
queuing up each morning outside
Law Courts in the Strand. The
ton Enquiry was a popular ite
the London journalistic season.
result of press demand for seat
tent was erected, but it was bett
sat in Court 73 and watch the
thing in the company of memb
the public. Week after week,
the assistance of his stern v
Queen's Counsel, the judge l
through an exotic array of wit
and government documents. B
s still a notoriously secret pl
which journalists and public
do not collude in an effort to
lish the truth about an impo
event – but here they were, p
like John Scarlett, head of the
Intelligence Committee, Sir R
Dearlove, the chief of MI6, Br
secret service (a latter-day M
Ian Fleming); all the panjandru
Whitehall even, somewhat b
mid in his astral head boy ter
Prime Minister himself. In Lo
ton's presence, they were
bedraggled, and, with the excep
Alastair Campbell himself, th
not appear to be antagonistical
ted against their journalistic co
pers. Hutton proved to be m
able guide, and it became cl
target that he was a Presby
from Belfast whose reputation

n the fair conduct of the terrorist ibunals held in Northern Ireland ıring the 1970s. Briefly, it became ossible to imagine that the inquiry ight lead to the opening up of the nole system.

Even now, no one will recall the any whitewash pages of the Hut-n tome devoted to the circum-ances of when intelligence may be nsidered "reliable" (in the judge's ew, only when it comes from an telligence source, even when that urce is shown to be wrong) or in-ed the distinctions between Iraqi ttlefield and ballistic payloads neither of which, as it turned out, isted). They will not care much hether "sexing up" ("a slang ex-ession," as the judge helpfully ob-rved) means lying or merely im-oving the truth. And they will rtainly not agree that Tony Blair's st honor was in any way vindicated the findings. If they think of Lord utton at all, it will be to ask how n intelligent adult could remain so norant of the way in which politi-l business is transacted.

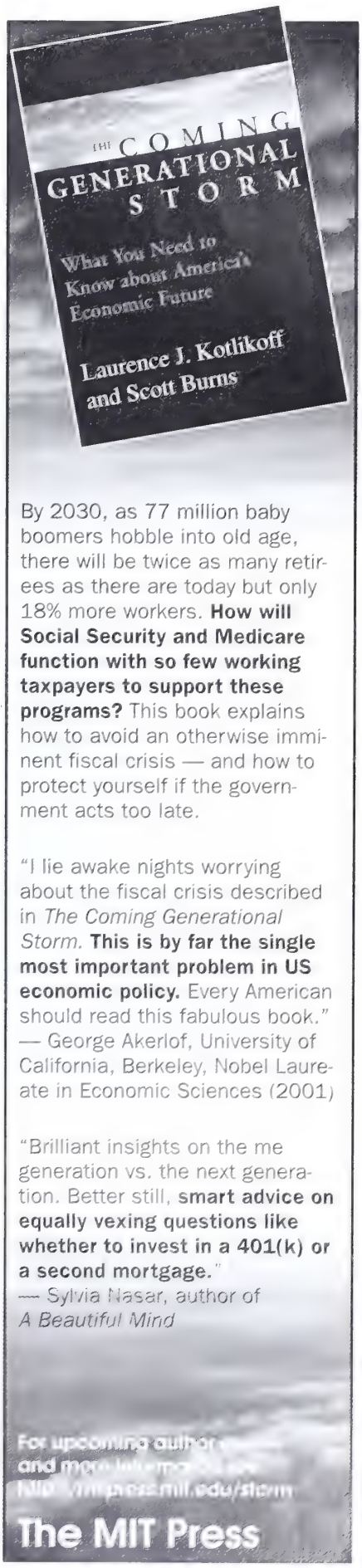
But the report remains crucial lading for anyone interested in the eckered progress of journalism in ır time. It includes an unscripted, alf-impromptu conversation with ndrew Gilligan on the BBC radio rogram *Today* at 6:07 A.M. on May 9 of last year. Gilligan, the pro-ram's defense correspondent, is peaking from home, in his pajamas:

> What we've been told by one of the senior officials in charge of drawing up that dossier was that, actually the government probably, erm, knew that the forty-five-minute figure was wrong, even before it decided to put it in. What this person says is that a week before the publication date of the dossier, it was actually rather, erm, a bland production. It didn't, the first draft prepared . . . by the Intelligence Agencies actually didn't say very much more than was public knowledge already and, erm, Downing Street [source says] . . . asked it to be sexed up . . . to be made more exciting and ordered more facts to be, er, to be found.

dgy and shifty-looking, swearing nder pressure, Gilligan failed t ess the judge. He [illegible]

of his conversation with Kelly and didn't often go into the office. Like Whittaker Chambers, he always appeared to be hiding something even when he was telling the truth. Then it emerged that he had sent an email to a Member of Parliament identifying Kelly as the source of another BBC reporter's story, even supplying a series of questions. Gilligan was an outsider at the BBC, tolerated for his scoops. When these facts were made public, he was considered beyond the pale. Now his colleagues say, "He pissed in our soup."

With all its errors, Gilligan's story poses the central question of what the BBC (and indeed any other current journalistic entity) is supposed to do. If the BBC is required to be "impartial," should it in fact break controversial stories at all? Should it not content itself with the lesser task of summarizing, umpire-style, the state of national debate? As historians note, the debate is not a new one; it reaches back to the BBC's origins and its raison d'être. Churchill called its early newscasts (they were delivered in black tie and formal jacket) "anonymous mugwumpery." I once listened to many recordings of early BBC reports, and I can testify that they were, as Edward R. Murrow remarked, painfully cautious and deferential. We would cringe to see political interviewers behave as the early BBC's did, and it took many decades before investigations were considered appropriate. Only by the 1960s did the BBC begin to reach out of its fusty Establishment monotone, making room for mildly subversive voices. It was Sir Hugh Greene (brother of Graham, ex-correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* in Hitler's Berlin, and the most remarkable leader the BBC has ever had) who pointed out that there were instances when "impartiality," far from being a virtue, might be considered to be a crime. Why should the BBC be neutral in the face of atrocity? Why should it not use all its power to further enlightenment? But Greene, like Dyke some thirty-odd years later, was forced out of the BBC for letting such maverick views. The great lesson of the BBC's history is how rapidly gains can be reversed

when timid management coincides with government intimidation. The Kelly war was bitterly fought because some sort of ultimate prerogative, without which the BBC could not function, appeared to be at stake. Although it never quite came clean on this count, the government appeared to be saying that the BBC should not be allowed to speculate on the matter of whether the government should have taken Britain to war. Of course it could report the findings of others, preferably discreetly and in a calm frame of mind, but it must not conduct its own investigation.

Why should the BBC not be allowed to report on anything it likes in the style it chooses? Because of its Royal Charter, the BBC is not supposed to stoop to the level of anonymously supplied innuendo with which the British press amuses its readers each day. Instead, it is required to hold itself to the highest standards of truthfulness. It must review any complaints made about its thousands of broadcast hours, offering corrections where appropriate. Sensing the weakness of the BBC case, Campbell maintained—correctly, as it turned out, since Kelly was an adviser, not an official, and had looked at the dossier rather than drafting it—that the story didn't come from "a senior intelligence official." Far from requiring any "sexing up," the document represented the views of the highest intelligence officers in the land. In court, Campbell was his usual lowering self, but he performed with admirable self-control. (For an appearance before a parliamentary committee, he had kept a pin in his hand, pricking himself so often to relieve his anger that the notes he took with him were spattered in blood.) He conveyed a sense of injured righteousness in relation to the BBC's slow response to his complaints, and he suggested, tellingly, that the BBC was in violation of its own rules. Perhaps, he suggested, the BBC should not have relied on a single source for so important a story. In defense, BBC executives relied on the notion that Gilligan had been right to report so important an allegation, even if it was only partly true. The judge wasn't convinced by this idea. But the question of whether the story should have been reported at all, or indeed how it should have been reported, was never discussed. It was hard not to feel that the critics of the BBC—not just Blair and his associates but Hutton, too—would be happier if news reporting reverted to its old innocuous ways.

Hardest to endure, however, was the offense committed against Dr. Kelly, in whose memory the hearings were held. Kelly was a nervous man, easily flustered, and he was plainly indiscreet. He knew about weapons sites, anthrax, and gas, and he had been thirty-seven times to Iraq when he was working as an inspector for UNSCOM. If the Blair government was serious about the contents of its dossier, it could have done worse than get Dr. Kelly to research and write it. The best moment of the hearing came when his ghostly voice emerged half-audibly from a tape recording made by another BBC journalist. "I don't think they're being willfully dishonest," he said of the intelligence chiefs turned wordsmiths, working to Alastair Campbell's orders like any team of sub-editors. "I think they just think that that's the way the public will appreciate it best." Kelly, we learned, was scrupulous in the use of language, as scientists as well as journalists and politicians were once taught to be. For him the Iraqi arsenal was not a significant threat. It might become dangerous in the future, but the remoteness of such a possibility hadn't been sufficiently emphasized, Kelly observed with characteristic diffidence, because it "takes away the case for war . . . to a certain extent."

"I accept the process that is happening," Kelly told one of the parliamentary committees, shortly after he had failed to tell the truth about the scale of his contacts with the press. Henceforth, Kelly knew, he would be defined as someone not reliable, unhelpful, never trusted. To use the chilling Civil Service phrase, he had become "surplus to requirements." His last notes express the wish to return to Baghdad, but he must have known that no one would now be buying him a ticket. He lunched with Mrs. Kelly on the day of his death:

> Q. How would you describe him at this time?
>
> A. Oh, I just thought he had a broken heart. He really was very, very . . . he had shrunk into himself. He looked . . . though he had shrunk, but I had no . . . at that stage of what he might do, I . . . absolutely no idea at all.
>
> Q. And that was how he was looki . . . and seeming to you. Did you talk mu . . . at lunch?
>
> A. No, no. He could not put two se . . . tences together. He could not talk at . . .

Good scandals, it is frequently sa . . . are about money, or sex, or power, b . . . In essence the Kelly story is one of . . . difference. Its immediate effect . . . Britain was to increase the conten . . . with which all political institutions . . . the press, the judiciary, politicians—a . . . held. It signals the end if not yet . . . Blair himself then at least of t . . . strangely utopian notion that gove . . . ment by information is possible or . . . sirable. It marks the steady, seemi . . . ly unstoppable growth of cynicism w . . . respect to such matters. And t . . . is what makes it so imp . . . tant for our times.

It is commonplace to speak of . . . excess power of a "New Class . . . media operatives as if these . . . somehow displaced old center . . . power or influence, but the real s . . . may well be a different one. Sh . . . term, preferring simplicity to c . . . plexity, the media have proved a . . . at destroying reputations. Sentim . . . and cruelty are the primary medi . . . ioms. The growth of so many org . . . zations designed to shape, minim . . . or merely describe the effect . . . media has further strengthened . . . notion that whatever is reported . . . comes to us packaged and sh . . . therefore not be believed. In . . . 1960s criticism of the way in w . . . the world was run paralleled th . . . mand for "free media." It . . . thought that broadcasting, and . . . vision in particular, might be t . . . into a tool for social reform. Th . . . grams of left-wing politics were . . . ceived with the aim of utilizing . . . vision, and in coups or revol . . . the television station was alwa . . . second place to be captured, aft . . . presidential palace. But theor . . . social transformation appear t . . . given up on broadcasting, a . . . such desire to co-opt or tra . . . broadcasting exists among t . . . tivists of the new anti-capitalist

Television and radio are too dif-
, too commercialized, to be easily
nged. By comparison with the In-
net, they feel old and unpromis-
. Who can know anymore how
ch information is necessary? Who
spend the time sorting out what
lly matters from so much truth-
ness? And anyhow, we can all say
t by now we know too much
ut how the media conduct their
iness. The notion that everything
ined as news is arranged for the
efit of television is considered to
self-evident. So is the assumption
t governments are bound to hate
adcasters and lie to them. For
se who watch television casually,
n for the declining number who
d newspapers, these are only fairly
portant things. They matter most
hose who are inside the media—
earances to the contrary, not a
t constituency or even a specially
luential one. And the growing
tempt or indifference with which
st media are regarded is the truest
iptom of the growing malaise of
nocracy in our time.

Blair's little war on reporting met
h much hostility throughout Britain,
it was assumed that the BBC would
netheless survive. Surely it would
useful when the next Royal Death
urred. (When the Queen Mother
d two years ago at the age of 101, the
vsreader on duty over the weekend
s taken to task for having elected to
ar a maroon tie instead of the more
mly and time-honored black one.)
. the notion that the BBC is unas-
able is a false one. It has many en-
ies, not least Rupert Murdoch,
ose papers regularly bemoan its left-
elitism, calling for the abolition of
license fee. The BBC cannot sub-
on high-mindedness without mar-
alizing itself in the style of PBS.
nen it fills its schedules with gar-
ning or home decorating, it is at-
ked, often with good reason, for
mbing down." Critics now suggest
t the BBC's commercial policies are
datory; and they are waiting for the
hcoming review of the BBC's char-
in the hope that its powers will be
bed or its funding substantially cut.
ong-term BBC future must somehow
m hard to imagine. Who would
wadays believe that a tax, the non-



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pertinent of which is, could the BBC's [illegible] sentence, is the best way to [illegible] ing public liberties? As to whether [illegible] a public organization redundantly promoting such things as truth-based reporting, such questions, it is tempting, and I do so here, to conclude that the BBC has had its day.

There are many reasons why the BBC should be allowed to survive, and they come from outside the penny-pinching British debate about its future. In our own time, belief in the market for information has acquired a totemic status. But it has proved easier to spread stock-market prices or consumer brands around the world than to arrange the supply of free information. The triumph of television as entertainment means that much of what is important—what we should think, or know about, as a bare minimum, if we are to consider ourselves truly citizens—is pushed out to the edges. With all the freedom it promises, the Internet nonetheless insists that wisdom is for those who can find it. Far from extending knowledge, or increasing literacy, the Age of Information has merely enshrined the notion that people should watch what they want, and not what anyone else considers to be good for them. This is a message encoded in every entertainment show, and it protects the right to ignorance. It is the ultimate Nimbyism, separating us from one another through the simple means of what we watch, hear, or read. Judged by such standards, the low-level aggressions perpetrated by journalists cannot really be called cynical.

The current cult hit of the London stage features a bewigged actor impersonating the TV host Jerry Springer. For an evening one can sing along with such routines as "Chick with a Dick," "Diaper Man," and—reprised to much applause—"This Is My Cheesy Jerry Springer Moment." The opera appeals effortlessly to Brit cultural snobbery, but it also offers a serious comment on the state of contemporary mass media. Forget high culture and literacy, the libretto advises us. Look at the real, the authentic TV. In all its fakery, cynicism, and contrivance, this is the contemporary scene. Why look for anything else?

Marshall McLuhan's work is not much read these days, but the degree to which we all appear to live [illegible] world of his making is quite striking. McLuhan didn't believe that media replaced one another, in linear succession, and he would surely still consider television to be the dominant medium of our times. For McLuhan there was no such thing as a "good" or "bad" TV show. Each communication had the same effect on viewers, and most were indistinguishable. McLuhan believed that television was destroying literacy and, consequently, history. Successive generations would acquire skills from television, but they wouldn't be skills capable of encouraging the notion of citizenship. Of course, stories were told on television, but these were circular and foreshortened. TV messages were instantaneous, easily grasped, more like Byzantine mosaics—the professor's grasp of art history was touchingly rudimentary, but he understood the contemporary cult of celebrity—than like Victorian novelistic panoramas. One might assume that everything could be fitted into television, McLuhan explained, but this was not so. Pain or disfigurement would do but not, alas, rigorous exposition. In the end, TV would not show us very much about the world except itself.

Together, McLuhan and the market have taken us to *Baywatch* and *American Idol*, giving us everything we might require in the matter of easily consumed spectacle. Cheaply exported TV shows are conveyed all over the world by satellite and dubbed into any language. But so much distraction hides a shortage of genuine information, and the new ventures claiming to deliver illumination haven't always been successful. Discovery, which is globally available, has proved to be a niche effort characterized by well-behaved prime-time animals. The novelty of instantaneous twenty-four-hour news has worn off, and CNN looks and feels like a place for those lost in strange hotels or airport lounges.

Why is it proving so hard to transfer First Amendment principles to a globalized commercial economy? Neocons and free-market theorists struggle with this conundrum, but in vain. Even if you happen to be Rupert Murdoch, it is hard to take seriously the notion of a free-market information utopia. Meanwhile the BBC breaks free market rules, succeeding as a public organization, and this explains why it is hated. But why should it be assumed that the BBC, or something like it, cannot tell us about the world? Or that some other set of arrangements will perform the same function better? By now, the BBC name is far more than a brand. It implies not a philosophy (remember, after all, that the BBC is in its origins deeply British) so much as a rough and ready way of looking at things. In France and in the United States, new international information services are being set up in partial homage to the BBC. (It's interesting that Alhurra, or "The Free One," a service ostensibly designed to supply "impartial" news to Iraq, is funded by Congress through an organization known as the Broadcasting Board of Governors, or the BBG.)

Throughout its history the BBC has always claimed to speak not on behalf of any group of people but for the culture of Britain and, beyond that, for the world itself. Arrogant, pompous, sometimes less than full comprehending—"hideously white" was the term used by the recently departed director general—it has always made good on such claims. Not all BBC reporting attains its own high standards, and the BBC is indeed very bad when it comes to making comprehensive apologies. But the BBC is a last bastion of intelligent speech and therefore of mass intelligence. It is even more important now than it was during the propaganda wars of the last century—because it is one of the few reliable maps of consciousness still available to us. It would be nice to think that one day there will be other sources of global, truthful information. For the moment, we will have to make do with the existing item, well worn and shabby, showing its age.

# THE PASSION OF THE RUMSFELD

## Congress stages an ordeal by rubber stamp

*By Wayne Biddle*

The annual Capitol Hill exercise of maneuvering a 775,000-square-foot rubber stamp onto the defense budget began on a frigid February morning when half of the neighborhood was knocked down by *Ricinus communis*, a member of the spurge family of plants cultivated since the Middle Ages for their purgative powers. Oil from the castor bean has not been taken as a laxative by many Americans since the Little Rascals generation, but it still finds use as a commercial lubricant, one that the military-industrial complex might find very handy in this year of soaring national debt. With Senate office buildings along Constitution Avenue quarantined after the discovery of *Ricinus* powder in Majority Leader Bill Frist's mail, both armed-services committees were forced to convene across the Hill in 2118 Rayburn, one of the grandest House chambers. "I feel somewhat like a bishop," observed John Warner of Virginia, chairman of the Senate panel, from his high dais—precisely how he is regarded by generals, admirals, and secretaries of defense who appear before him to account for their dispersements of hundreds of billions of dollars.

Humans and horses are two of the animals most vulnerable to ricin—horses especially so, since they cannot vomit. The military has returned to *dégoûtant* levels of spending after a post-Soviet decade of relative moderation, driven by a war against terrorism even more amorphous than the Red menace that served so lucratively for fifty years. Whoever the nut was who sent that toxic letter had no idea what a perfect curtain-raiser it would be for the FY2005 defense bill. Unless he *did*, but we must put that fascinating possibility aside for the sake of rational discourse. What is undeniable is that the war seemed to come home that morning, which always helps unfold the national wallet.




Another war was coming home, too—still coming home, though the generation that survived its catastrophes is well into the age when memory becomes more of an organic problem than a political flashpoint. The activities of President Bush and contender John Kerry during the Vietnam era—as far distant now as the Spanish Civil War was then—attained at least the level of attention signified by newsweekly cover stories because the President regularly storyboards himself as military personnel and Kerry adorns himself with fiftyish veterans on the campaign trail. Few American leaders attain, let alone keep, positions of national stature without demonstrating loyalty to the "monstrous exotic," as Walt Whitman called the armed services. The demeanor of the committee members in 2118 Rayburn, whose constitutional role is to act as stewards of the public purse, showed just how seamless this loyalty has become.

"We must remember that defense of our homeland begins on the dis-

*Wayne Biddle lives and writes in the Washington, D.C., area. His last letter from Washington, "The World's Biggest Tab," appeared in the January issue.*

Illustration by Leif Parsons

tant battlefields of the world," intoned the theatrically courtly Warner, who was secretary of the Navy for twenty-three months during the second Nixon Administration while still married to Paul Mellon's daughter, Catherine. Their 1973 divorce delivered Atoka, a 552-acre estate in Fauquier County horse country, plus the millions to run it, which he used to entertain multitudes of Republican activists. In 1976 he entered a state of matrimony with Elizabeth Taylor, whose celebrity helped him win a close election to the Senate two years later. Although he has kept that seat ever since, his term as her seventh husband ended in 1982. Now seventy-seven, he appears focused on running the committee, even on the day last December of his third wedding, to the widow by suicide of longtime Republican hand Paul Vander Myde, an assistant secretary of commerce during the Reagan years.

"I'm encouraged by my initial review of the President's defense budget for the fiscal year 2005," he assured Donald Rumsfeld, who had brought along the Pentagon's top money man, comptroller Dov Zakheim, just in case anybody wasn't encouraged. "This request of $401.7 billion for the department represents a 5 percent increase over the FY04 authorized level and the fourth straight year of growth for the defense budget. This sends a strong signal to the world of America's commitment to freedom. And the President and you, Mr. Secretary, deserve special recognition because we know the competitive forces on our budget today." That is, the Department of Defense was the only federal agency to receive a significant raise other than Homeland Security.

After a brief statement by the panel's senior Democrat, Carl Levin of Michigan, pointing out that the budget was at least $50 billion short because it contained no funds for keeping troops in Iraq or Afghanistan, and that a presidential "stop-loss" order involuntarily extending soldiers' enlistment had been necessary to keep sufficient numbers of them there, [illegible] Rumsfeld had his go.

First, he gratefully acknowledged [illegible] $401.7 billion represented "an enormous amount of taxpayers' hard-earned money" but insisted, like the Cold Warrior he used to be, that "such investments will likely be required for a number of years to come, because our nation is engaged in a struggle that could well go on for a number of years." He then turned to a subject of some current celebrity:

> During my confirmation hearing . . . I was asked what would keep me up at night. And I answered, "intelligence." I said that because the challenge facing the intelligence community today is truly difficult. Their task is to penetrate closed societies . . . and you [to staff] might want to put that picture of a closed society up . . . and organizations and try and learn things our adversaries don't want them to know. That's the Korean peninsula. The DMZ is the line in the middle. South Korea—the same people as in North Korea—has got light. This is a satellite photo. It has light and energy and opportunity and a vibrant democratic system. North Korea is a dark, dark country.

With this image firmly in the minds of the peering committee members, he went on to lament the "impression that has and is being created of broad intelligence failures," that "intelligence will never be perfect," and that "we do not, will not, and cannot know everything that's going on in this world of ours."

Chairman Warner then commended him for his "very strong and informative and forthright statement."

The secretary was not quite off the hook, but essentially so. Levin sought clarification on how he could have stated publicly in September 2002 that Iraq had "amassed large clandestine stockpiles of chemical weapons" when the Defense Intelligence Agency produced a [illegible] study that same month stating "There is no reliable information . . . on whether Iraq is producing and stockpiling chemical weapons." To which Rumsfeld replied, "I'm sure I never saw that piece of intelligence."

The rest of the session consisted of light sparring with Democrats members such as Ted Kennedy and Hillary Clinton over the intelligence thing and the $50 billion shortsheeting. On the latter, Rumsfeld claimed, with Dov Zakheim's support, that wars have always been funded by supplemental requests. This was an untruth. But that Zakheim, who would resign in March, had called it a "pathological system" at his first press conference as comptroller in May 2001 was not placed in the congressional record. Republican members mostly used their time to assuage perceived insults from across the aisle, except for Arizona senator John McCain, who predicted a "very large exodus" from the National Guard now that 40 percent of the troops in Iraq were being drawn from such units. Demonstrating why the White House treats him so warily, he also sharply questioned why "many members of the Defense Policy [Board] and [Defense] Science Board were lobbying DOD and Air Force officials to approve the lease of a hundred Boeing 767" tankers, calling this an "incestuous relationship." Warner then adjourned the hearing in time for lunch.

When the House Armed Services Committee gathered that afternoon in its home chamber, Chairman Duncan Hunter, a former Army Ranger who represents part of San Diego County, greeted Rumsfeld with the hope that he had not "grown weary of the Rayburn Building yet" and noted his "crunch for time." Like Senator Warner, he complimented the secretary for making "a sound attempt to balance the urgent needs of the theaters of war with long-term requirements," though no one had penciled in the missing $50 billion during lunchtime. The budget was "a good package—one of the few budgets that has been presented that is a real increase," which he somehow pegged at 7 percent instead of Warner's 5 percent. The senior Democrat, Ike Skelton, then applauded the increase, too, but said the Army deserved more.

Rumsfeld repeated his morning

formance, complete with photo dark, dark North Korea. Ques-ns from House members tend to more parochial than those from ators, concentrating on the full-s of the local pork barrel. The tes-ony produced few zingers, other n nitpicking matters such as that en the Iraq war began just 1,600 s of body armor were being pro-ed per month for several hundred usand troops, so that only as of uary 2004 did all personnel in the nbat theater have realistically tective flak jackets to wear. Like-e, of some 11,000 Humvee jeeps, y about 500 were armored at the inning of combat, and the cur-t total is still just 2,000.

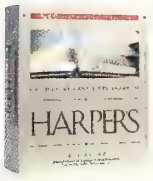
"Somebody's going to die because door . . . of the Humvee is no ter than my CJ-7, which is in ss and canvas," ventured Rob mons, a Republican from SUV-essed Connecticut, albeit using wrong verb tense—many sol-rs have already been killed or imed in these vehicles. The sub-t was dropped, however, and just y an army that spends upwards of 00 billion a year was caught flat-ted on an issue as conventional armor, going into battle with nb-cluck gear, remains unknown.

When Loretta Sanchez, a Califor-Democrat, tried to press Rumsfeld WMD intelligence and the miss-operational funds for Iraq and ghanistan, she was cut short by nter, while Rumsfeld laughingly gested they have lunch.

Hunter eventually brought the af-noon to a climax with a short ech about how "the revelations t we've seen—the film of people ng pushed off buildings, people ng executed, the hundreds, now, mass graves that are being turned in Iraq—all say one thing and t is that what we did was right d that the moral purpose of the ple wearing the uniform of the ited States was right and that s debate that is now taking place r whether or not our intelligence s perfectly accurate does not go to t point—that we have undertak-and are finishing an enormous k for humanity."

'Mr. Chairman, I must say, I agree




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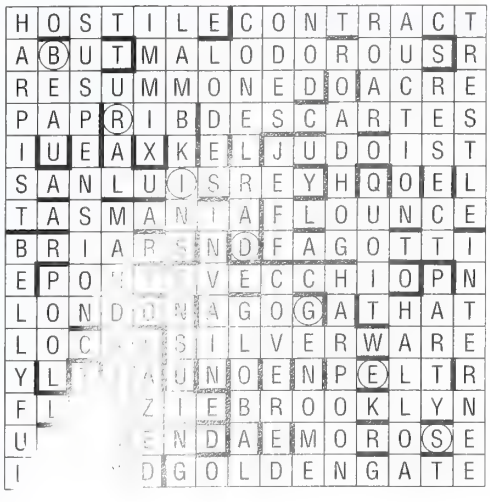
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SOLUTION TO THE APRIL PUZZLE




NOTES FOR "CROSS-WORDS":

*Unclued answers are BRIDGES. Famous: LONDON, GOLDEN GATE, BROOKLYN, SAN LUIS REY, PONTE VECCHIO, and also LLOYD, BEAU, and JEFF; types of: TRESTLE, SUSPENSION, COVERED; and, of course, CONTRACT and AUCTION.*

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an aste*

ACROSS: 1. *; 8. a-but; 9. *; hidden; 18. *; 19. ju(do-is)t; fa-(got)-ti; 32. ago-G; 35. r fl(zoo-rev.)ie; 43. *; 44. mor

DOWN: 1. ha(RP-is)t; 2 n(O)D.; 7. R-oar; 10. qu(O)it; 22. man-D.A.- versal; 29. en-suing; 3 hall-O-a; 38. I(A-Z)ed

d; 14. hidden; 16. palindrome; 17. mania; 24. fl.-ounce; 25. b(r-1)ars; 26. 57. lo-cal; 39. *; 41. two mngs.; 42.

s; 3. lamb(s)kin(s); 4. *; 5. o(d)d(n)e(s)s; 6. road-h*-go(rev.); 13. hidden; 15. *; 20. in; 25. bel(lyf*)u*-L; 27. inter-nee; 28. re-1. P-arty; 33. glo(b)al*; 34. g(e)nome; 36.

Rumsfeld replied.

"We appreciate your time, Mr. Secretary."

"I hope you will."

And there ended the last congressional oversight.

A week later, Rumsfeld turned to the Hill at the invitation of the House Appropriations Committee's defense subpanel. Since the turbulent presidency of Andrew Jackson in the 1830s, when Congress was wracked by party rifts and the tactic of larding budget bills with political riders became dysfunctional, the process of authorizing government spending has been on a separate legislative track from actually ordering cash to flow from the Treasury. Although the two armed-services committees have acquired a well-deserved reputation for cheerleading as authorizers of the military budget—their office décor is more *Kriegsakademie* than the Pentagon's—the integrity of the system is supposed to be stiffened by having other groups, the appropriations committees, pass expenditures on a line-by-line basis. But the appropriators are today just as patriotically proud as the authorizers of their ability to hand out staggering sums of money. Representative Jerry Lewis, a California life-insurance salesman from San Bernardino County who chairs the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, greeted Rumsfeld by promising to protect him from pressures elsewhere in Congress "targeting our budget" (which he described as "just a slight smidge beyond $400 billion") and to make sure it was "not eroded by other wish lists."

Although one Democrat, David Obey of Wisconsin, had the gall to tell the secretary that "this budget is no more a budget than a chorus of kazoos is the Marine Band," because it contained nothing for the war, Rumsfeld was left free to make use of his same dark, dark North Korea script from the week before. There were then a few more queries about thin-skinned Humvees. ("We had a threat situation in Iraq that was changing," offered General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who [illegible] Rumsfeld: new "up-armored" models would now "protect [illegible] from meeting them [illegible] Walter Reed [illegible].") But the atmosphere remained loose [illegible] Republican from Ohio, to inquire about an "order" he had heard of on a recent fact-finding [illegible], that no more Burger [illegible] Bells would be built for the troops "because there's a big contractor complaining that the kids aren't eating in the chow hall." The name Halliburton was not uttered, and the query went unanswered.

Taking up the rear of the line of interrogators was Jim Moran, a seven-term Democrat who represents the northern Virginia district containing the Pentagon. He has been in somewhat bad odor even within his own party since observing at a March 2003 antiwar rally in suburban Reston that "if it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war with Iraq, we would not be doing this." He duly apologized, and has tried to move on as best he can. "Mr. Secretary, I'm sorry that your last questioner could not be treating you in the kind of warm and fuzzy manner that you prefer," he began. He then charged that the $10 billion earmarked for fighting global terrorism in FY2003 that Congress had refused to authorize in an action Rumsfeld regularly cites as justification for seeking Iraq money through supplementals—was a "slush fund," not a properly defined estimate, and therefore rightly denied. "The service chiefs all said within the last week that they were going to run bone dry of money by the end of June," he continued. "To wait until after the presidential elections [to submit a supplemental request] is blatantly playing politics in everyone's perspective. And I think that discredits the budget office of the Department of Defense and the Congress's role itself."

Mr. Moran had some more points to make, but Chairman Lewis admonished him to "move right along, sir," and within minutes gaveled the hearing to an end.

It might be of interest that the 2005 defense bill contains $441 million for work on the B-2 Stealth bomber, which was developed twenty years ago to drop H-bombs on Moscow, $4.7 billion for the next generation F-22 "Raptor" jet fighter, which will enhance the supremacy of American warplanes in skies where they have not been challenged in the least bit by any existing or potential rival for a generation; $1.75 billion for the V-22 "Osprey" tilt-rotor aircraft that has slaughtered its test crews for decades; $2.6 billion for the new Virginia-class attack submarine that has no foe whatsoever; and $1.2 billion for "Star Wars" anti-missile defense that, well, requires no reason at all by now. These programs alone total nearly $20 billion, about the level of Harvard University's endowment and greater than the GDP of most nations. There will be little or nothing said about these programs as the budget wends its way through Congress for enactment next fall.

Far more demanding of the electorate's attention will be whether President Bush gooted his way through the Air National Guard rather than go to Southeast Asia, which would have been a no-brainer for any young man outside the patriotic-doofus category, to use a popular old phrase from those days. Or whether John Kerry really is what a turkey asshole, likewise, he had been by going, and then trying to keep others from making the same mistake. These are the terms that can still bring men to fisticuffs in stinky barrooms across the land any night of the week. They are part of like why the previous generation still cannot bear to mention Japanese civilians when the *Enola Gay* is put on display and why the generation before that could not stand to talk about what greeted the green farmboy recruits sent to France in 1918. They are why nature intended that old soldiers should fade away along with whoever supported or opposed them. And they are why members of Congress would apparently rather do almost anything this year than take a hard look at the $401.7 billion of taxpayers' hard-earned money.

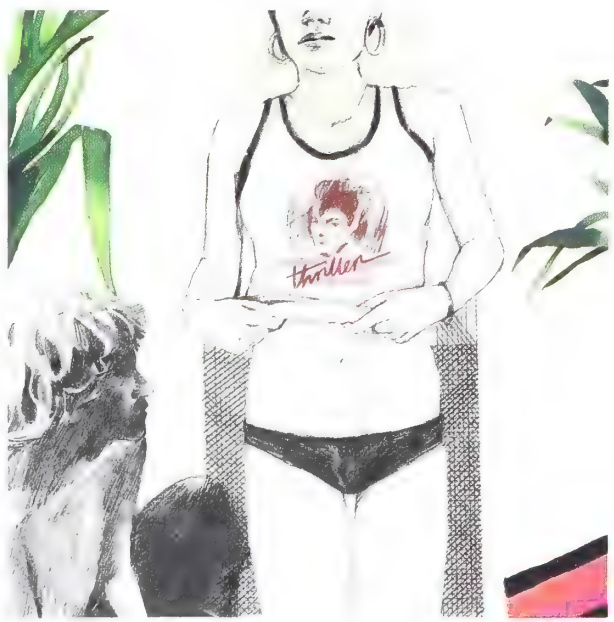
# NATASHA

*By David Bezmozgis*

*is the opposite which is good to us.*
—Heraclitus

When I was sixteen I was high most of the time. That year my parents bought a new house at the edge of Toronto's sprawl. A few miles north were cows; south, the city. I spent most of my time in basements. The suburbs offered nothing, and so I lived a predominantly subterranean life. At home, separated from my parents by floor and stairs, I smoked hash, watched television, read, and masturbated. In other basements I smoked, watched television, and refined my style with girls.

In the spring my uncle Fima, my grandmother's youngest brother, met his second wife. She arrived from Moscow for two weeks to get acquainted. Dusa, our dentist, had known the woman in Russia and recommended her. She was almost forty, my uncle forty-four. The woman was another in a string of last chances. A previous last chance had led to his first marriage. That marriage, to a fellow Russian emigrant, had failed within six months. My uncle was a good man, a hard worker, and a polymath. He read books, newspapers, and travel brochures. He could speak with equal authority about the Crimean War and the Toronto Maple Leafs. Short months after arriving in Toronto he took a job giving tours of the city to visiting Russians. But he wasn't rich and never would be. He was also honest to a fault and nervous with people. My grandmother's greatest fear was that he would always be alone in the world.




Zina, the woman, had greasy brown hair, cut in a mannish style. She was thin, her body almost without contour. The first time I saw her was when my uncle brought her to our house for dinner. She wore tight blue pants, high heels, and a yellow silk blouse that accentuated her conspicuously long nipples. The top buttons of her blouse were undone, and a thin gold chain with a Star of David clung to her breastbone. When she kissed me in greeting, she smelled of sweat and lilac.

Zina strode into our house as if she were on familiar territory, and her confidence had the effect of making my uncle act as though he were the stranger. He stumbled through the introductions and almost knocked over his chair. He faltered as he tried to explain how they had spent the day, and Zina chided him and finished his sentences. When my mother served the raspberry torte, Zina fed my uncle from her fork. In Russia she was a "teacher of English," and she sprinkled her conversation with English words and phrases. The soup my mother served was "tasty," our dining room "divine," and my father "charming." After dinner, in the living room, she placed her hand on my uncle's knee. I was, as usual, high, and I became fixated on the hand. It rested on my uncle's knee like a small pale animal. Sometimes it would arch or rise completely to make a point,

*David Bezmozgis's first collection,* Natasha and Other Stories, *will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in June. His last story for* Harper's Magazine, *"Roman Berman, Massage Therapist," appeared in the May 2003 issue.*

Illustration by Michael Gillette

always to settle back on the knee. Under her hand, my uncle's knee barely moved.

After her two weeks in Canada, Zina returned to Moscow. Before she left, my mother and aunt took her shopping and bought her a new wardrobe. They believed that Zina would be good for my uncle. The last thing he needed was a timid wife. Maybe she was a little aggressive, but to make it in this country you couldn't apologize every step like him. My grandmother was anxious because Zina had a young daughter in Moscow, but she conceded that at this age to find a woman without a child probably meant there was something wrong with her. My uncle did not disagree. There were positives and negatives, he said.

The decision was made quickly, and days after Zina's departure, my uncle wrote her a letter inviting her to return and become his wife. One month later Zina was back in Toronto. This time my entire family went to the airport to greet her. We stood at the gate and waited as a stream of Russian faces filtered by. Near the end of the stream, Zina appeared. She was wearing an outfit my mother had purchased for her. She carried a heavy suitcase. When she saw my uncle she dropped the suitcase and ran to him and kissed him on his cheeks and on his mouth. A thin blonde girl, also carrying a suitcase, picked up Zina's abandoned bag and dragged both suitcases through the gate. The girl had large blue eyes, and her straight blonde hair was cut into bangs. She strained toward us with the bags and stopped behind Zina, her face without expression, and waited for her mother to introduce her. Her name was Natasha. She was fourteen. My mother said, Meet your new cousin. Later, as we drove my grandparents home, my grandmother despaired that the girl's father was obviously a *shaygets*.

One week after their arrival, everyone went down to North York City Hall for the civil ceremony. A retired judge administered the vows, and we took photos in the atrium. There was no rabbi, no *chuppa*, no stomping of the glass. Afterward we all went to our house for a barbecue. One after another, people made toasts. My uncle and Zina sat at the head of the table like a real married couple. For a wedding gift they were given money to help them rent a larger apartment. My uncle's one bedroom would not do. This wasn't Russia, and the girl couldn't continue to sleep in the living room. The one time my grandparents had gone to visit, Natasha emerged from the shower naked and, without so much as acknowledging their presence, went into the kitchen. While my grandparents tried to listen to my uncle and Zina talk about Zina's plans to get her teaching certificate, Natasha stood in the kitchen and ate an apple.

At the barbecue, my mother seated Natasha between me and my cousin, Jana. It was our duty to make her feel welcome. She was new to the country, she had no friends, she spoke no English, she was now family. Jana, two years my senior, had no interest in a fourteen-year-old girl. Especially one who dressed like a Polish hooker, didn't speak English, and wasn't saying anything in Russian either. Midway through the barbecue, a car full of girls came for Jana, and Natasha became my responsibility. My mother encouraged me to show her around the house.

Without enthusiasm I led Natasha around the house. Without enthusiasm she followed. For lack of anything else to say, I would enter a room and announce its name in Russian. We entered the kitchen and I said *kitchen*, my parents' bedroom and I said *bedroom*, the living room and I said *the room where we watch television*, since I had no idea what it was called in Russian. Then I walked her down into the basement. Through the blinds we could see the back yard and the legs of our newly incarnated family. I said, *That's it, the whole house*. Natasha looked around the room, then shut the blinds, rendering the already dim basement almost dark. She dropped down into one of the two velour beanbag chairs in front of the television. Chairs that I had been earnestly and consistently humping since the age of twelve.

—You have all of this to yourself?

—Yes.

—It must be nice.

—It is.

—What do you do here?

—Watch television, read.

—That's it?

—That's most of it.

—Do you bring girls here?

—Not really.

—Have you had sex down here?

—What?

—You don't have to say if yo don't want to. I don't really care. doesn't mean anything.

—You're fourteen.

—So what? That doesn't mea anything either. I've done it a hun dred times. If you want, I'll do with you.

—We're cousins.

—No we're not.

—Your mother married my uncle

—It's too bad. He's nice.

—He is.

—I feel sorry for him. She'll rui his life.

—It's hard to imagine his life ge ting worse.

—She'll make it worse.

—She's your mother.

—She's a whore. Do you want t know how it sounds when they do i

—Not particularly.

—They do it at least three times day. He groans like he is bein killed, and she screams lik she is killing him.

A month after the wedding, m uncle, Zina, and Natasha found new two-bedroom apartment te minutes' walk from our house. Sum mer vacation had just begun, and i stead of going off to camp I ha made an arrangement to work f Rufus, my dealer. Rufus was twent and while keeping up his busine was also studying philosophy at th University of Toronto. Aside fro providing me with drugs, he also re ommended books. Because of him graduated from John Irving an Mordecai Richler to Camus, Her clitus, Catullus, and Kafka. Th summer, in exchange for doing th deliveries, I got free dope (no withstanding whatever I shorted c potheads) and a little money. I al got to borrow the books Rufus ha been reading over the course of t

. This, to me, was a perfectly le-
nate way to spend two months,
igh my parents insisted that I
a job. Telling them about the
already had was out of the ques-
, and so the summer started off
point of conflict.

week into my summer vacation,
mother resolved our conflict. If I
no intention of finding a job,
would put me to good use. Since
as home by myself, I would be
scripted into performing an es-
tial service. I was alone and
asha was alone. She didn't know
one in the city and was making a
sance of herself. From what I
ld understand, she wasn't actual-
oing anything to be a nuisance,
her mere presence in the apart-
nt was inconvenient. My family
that my uncle needed time alone
h his new wife, and having
asha around made him uncom-
able. Besides, she was difficult.
uncle reported that she refused
peak to her mother and literally
n't said a word in weeks.

The morning after my mother de-
ed that I would keep Natasha
npany I went to my uncle's new
rtment. I hadn't seen him, Zina,
Natasha since the wedding and
barbecue. They hadn't been back
our house, and I had had no rea-
to go there. In fact, in all the
rs that my uncle lived in Toron-
I had never been to his apart-
nt. Despite occasional invita-
ns, I avoided the place because I
ferred not to see how he lived.

By the time I arrived, my uncle
l already left for work. Zina met
at the door wearing a blue Sovi-
housedress that could have passed
a hospital gown. Again, she wore
bra. I was greeted by nipples,
n Zina. She put her hand on my
n and ushered me into the
chen, where she was filling out
ms to obtain credentials from the
ard of Education. A stack of
ms was laid out on the table
ng with black bread and cucum-
s. She made me a sandwich I did
t want and told me what a won-
ful man my uncle was. How she
s very fortunate to find such a
n and how good things would be
soon as Natasha became accus-
tomed to their new life. We were co-conspirators, she and I, both working for Natasha's well-being. She was convinced that I would be able to help her. She sensed that Natasha liked me. Natasha didn't like many people.

—I'm her mother, and no matter what she says I would cut off my right arm for her. But she has always been different. Even as a baby she hardly smiled.

Zina led me to Natasha's door, knocked, and announced that I was here. After a brief pause Natasha opened the door. She was wearing blue jeans and a souvenir T-shirt from Niagara Falls. I could see behind her into the room. There was a small bed and a table. On one wall was an old poster of Michael Jackson circa *Thriller*. In bold red letters a phonetic approximation of Michael Jackson's name was written in Cyrillic. I read the name slowly letter by letter, since I was effectively illiterate. It gave me something to do while Natasha and Zina glared at each other in acrimonious silence.

—I'm an enemy because I took her away from her criminal friends. I'm an enemy because I wanted to give her a better life. Now she won't say a word, but one day she'll thank me.

Without breaking her silence, Natasha grabbed my hand and led me out of the apartment. As we went past the door, Zina called after us, telling me to watch out for Natasha. I was to make sure that she didn't do anything stupid. Natasha should remember what it would do to my uncle if something were to happen to her. Even if she didn't care about how Zina felt, she should at least consider my uncle, for whom she was now like a daughter.

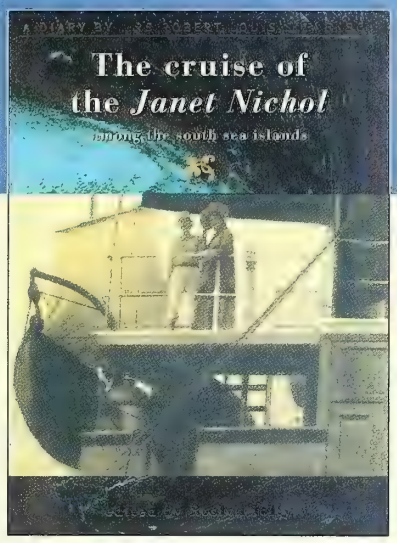
In the stairway Natasha released my hand, and we descended to the back of the building and the parking lot. Outside, she turned and spoke what might have been her first words in weeks.

—I can't stand looking at her. I want to scratch out my eyes. In Moscow I never had to see her. Now she's always there.

We wound our way out of the parking lot and toward the subdivisions leading back to my house. On

"I can see her now – a small woman in a blue dress, sitting barefoot on the roof of the after-cabin of a trading schooner in the South Seas.... She is holding a large silvered revolver in each hand, shooting sharks with deadly accuracy."

– Austin Strong, on Fanny Stevenson, "The Most Unforgettable Character I've M




**The Cruise of the *Janet Nichol* among the South Sea Islands**

A Diary by
Mrs. Robert Louis Stevenson
Edited by Roslyn Jolly

In April 1890 the steamer *Janet Nichol* set sail from Sydney for a three-month voyage through the western and central Pacific. Aboard were seven European men, a crew of forty islanders, and one woman: a short-haired, barefoot, cigarette-smoking American, Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson, wife of Robert Louis Stevenson.

This extraordinary travel book is the story of an unconventional woman, her unusual marriage, and her adventurous journey through a rapidly changing Pacific world.

Published with
University of New South Wales Press
Clothbound, $24.95

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
P.O. Box 50096, Seattle, WA 98145
1-800-441-4115
www.washington.edu/uwpress

the way I decided to stop at Rufus' and pick up an eighth [illegible] regular heads. I walked ahead and Natasha trailed along, [illegible]ed in the uniform lawns and houses than the specifics of wh[illegible] going. Aside from the old [illegible] nanny wheeling a little white [illegible] the streets were empty. The sun was neither bright [illegible] doors felt [illegible] like the outdoors, God's thermostat set to "suburban basement."

—In Moscow everyone lives in apartments. The only time you see houses like this is in the country, where people have their dachas.

—Three years ago this was the country.

We found Rufus on his backyard deck, listening to Led Zeppelin, eating an omelette. Although he was alone, the table was set for four, with a complete set of linen napkins and matching cutlery. Rufus didn't seem at all surprised to see us. That was part of his persona; Rufus never appeared surprised about anything. At twenty he had already accomplished more than most men twice his age. It was rumored that, aside from dealing, Rufus was also a partner in a used-car lot/body shop and various other ventures. Nobody who knew him had ever seen him sleep.

Rufus insisted on cooking us breakfast. Natasha and I sat at the kitchen counter as he explained that even when he ate alone he liked to set a full table. The mere act of setting extra places prevented him from receding into solipsism. It also made for good karma, so that even when he was not expecting guests there existed tangible evidence announcing that he was open to the possibility. While Rufus spoke, Natasha's eyes roamed around the house. Taking in the spotless kitchen, the copper cookware, the living room with matching leather sofas, the abstract art on the walls. Other than the contents of the basement refrigerator, the house gave no indication that it was owned and inhabited by a drug dealer barely out of his teens. This was no accident. Rufus believed that it helped his business. His clients were all middle-class suburban kids, and despite his bohemian inclina-

[illegible] nice house in the suburbs was [illegible] perfect location. It kept him lo[illegible] and [illegible] their dealer felt just like coming home.

Back on the deck I explained to Rufus about Natasha, leaving out certain details I didn't think he needed to know. As Rufus and I talked, Natasha sat contentedly with her omelette and orange juice. Since leaving my uncle's apartment, her attitude toward everything had taken the form of a certain benign detachment. She was calibrated somewhere between resignation and joy.

I noticed Rufus looking at her.

—Did I mention she was fourteen?

—My interest, I assure you, is purely anthropological.

—The anthropology of jailbait.

—She's an intense little chick.

—She's Russian. We're born intense.

—With all due respect, Berman, you and her aren't even the same species.

To get her attention, Rufus leaned across the table and tapped Natasha on the arm. She looked up from her food and returned Rufus's smile. He asked me to translate for him. His own family, he said, could be traced back to Russia. He wanted to know what Russia was like now. What it was really like. Natasha shrugged.

—Russia is shit, but people enjoy themselves.

After that first day, Natasha started coming to our house regularly. I no longer went to pick her up but waited instead for her arrival. Through my basement window I could see her as she appeared in our back yard and wandered around inspecting my mother's peonies or the raspberry and red-currant bushes. If I was in a certain mood, I would watch her for a while before going upstairs and opening the sliding glass door in the kitchen.

We spent most of our days in the basement. I read and Natasha studied television English. When I had a delivery to make, she accompanied me. Between reading, television English, and deliveries, I taught Natasha how to get high. I showed her how to roll a joint, to light a pipe, or, in a pinch, where to cut the holes in a Gatorade bottle. In [illegible] change, Natasha taught me [illegible] things. Many of these things h[illegible] nothing to do with sex.

After our days in the baseme[illegible] we would listen for my mother to [illegible] rive home from work. To avoid so[illegible] serious unpleasantness, I made[illegible] habit of setting my alarm for 5:[illegible] P.M. If we weren't sleeping, the ala[illegible] simply reminded us to open a w[illegible] dow or get dressed. By the time [illegible] mother came home we were usua[illegible] in the kitchen or out in the ba[illegible] yard. Chores that had been assign[illegible] to me were usually done at this ti[illegible] It pleased my mother to come ho[illegible] and find me, spade in hand, turni[illegible] over the earth around the be[illegible] bushes. Also, once it was establish[illegible] that Natasha much preferred to s[illegible] at our house, my mother grew m[illegible] than accustomed to having h[illegible] around. Unlike me and my fath[illegible] Natasha volunteered to help her [illegible] the kitchen. The two of them wo[illegible] stand at the sink peeling potatoes [illegible] slicing up radishes and cucumbers [illegible] salad. I often came in to overhear [illegible] mother telling stories about h[illegible] childhood in postwar Latvia—a la[illegible] of outhouses, horse-drawn wago[illegible] and friendly neighbors. In Nata[illegible] she found a receptive audien[illegible] They spoke the same language[illegible] Russian girl to Russian girl. Impli[illegible] was a commonality of experien[illegible] This despite that, in too many wa[illegible] Natasha's childhood couldn't ha[illegible] been more different from my mo[illegible] er's if she had been raised by Pe[illegible] vian cannibals.

No more than two weeks afte[illegible] picked her up at my uncle's apartme[illegible] Natasha had become a fixture at [illegible] house. It was a situation that, for [illegible] ferent and even perversely conflict[illegible] reasons, suited everyone. It solved t[illegible] Natasha problem for my uncle [illegible] solved the Zina problem for Natas[illegible] It made my mother feel like she w[illegible] protecting my uncle's last chance [illegible] happiness and also satisfying her o[illegible] latent desire for a daughter. It absolv[illegible] me from the need to find a job a[illegible] cast me in a generally favorable lig[illegible] with the rest of my family. A[illegible] strangely enough, Natasha's incor[illegible] ration into the household made t[illegible] things we did in the basement se[illegible]

; bad. Or not bad at all. What we did the basement became only a part who we were.

One day after some but not too many s together, Natasha simply slid out ıer jeans and removed her shirt. We re sitting inches apart, each on our n beanbag. Moments before, we had ished smoking a joint and I had gone :k to Kafka's diaries. I became aware what she was doing slower than a teen-year-old should have. That she v me looking changed nothing. On e beanbag, naked, she turned to me d said very simply: *Do you want to?* sixteen, no expert but no virgin, I ed in a permanent state of *want to*. t for everything I knew, I knew al- ost nothing. In the middle of the day, ıtasha in the basement was the first ne I had seen a live naked girl. All the rts available for viewing. Nothing in previous dimly lit gropings com- red. In my teenage life, what was ore elusive than a properly illumi- ted naked girl? The fact that it was ıtasha—my nominal cousin, four- n, strange—no longer mattered. Af- years of sex as negotiation, I was ıazed to discover that it could be as rfunctory as brushing your teeth.

That day was the first of many sts. With the house to ourselves d no threat of being disturbed, we d everything I had ever dreamed of ing—including some things that ıdn't even occurred to me. We owered together, we slept in the me bed, I watched her walk across e room, I watched her pee. These osaic things, being new, were as ex- ing as the sex. And for me the sex ıs as much about the variation as e pleasure. I kept a mental list from sition to position, crossing off one complishment after another. Noth- g was repeated until everything was tempted. That way, in the event I as struck by a bus, I would feel as ough I had lived a full life. Most of e things we did Natasha had al- ady done, but she was perfectly appy to oblige.

In our quieter moments, Natasha ld me about the men who had tak- ı her picture. She hadn't minded ıy of it except that they couldn't xplain why they liked one thing ver another. They had always ıown exactly how they wanted her to look, but none of them could give her a reason. Why did they prefer her leg raised this way and not that, why squatting from behind or holding her hand in a certain position? Some of the positions had been practically identical, yet they had insisted on them. The only explanation they offered was that it looked good or that it was sexy. And yet she never felt that way about men. She never cared how they looked or what side she was viewing them from.

—You don't care how I look?

—You look how you look. If you bent over, it wouldn't make any difference to me.

I bent over.

—That doesn't make any difference?

—It looks stupid. But what if I bend over? Does it look stupid?

—No, it looks good.

—Why is that?

—It just does.

—You can't explain it?

I thought it had to do with the forbidden. The attraction to the forbidden in the forbidden. The forbiddenest. But it still wasn't much of an answer.

At the same time that things with Natasha were improving, my mother started to hear the first rumblings of trouble in my uncle's marriage. My grandparents, who had always been accustomed to visiting my uncle frequently, were informed that maybe they shouldn't come over quite so often. Their habit of arriving unannounced was aggravating Zina, who insisted that she had too much to worry about without always having to accommodate my grandparents. My grandmother, although hurt, naturally made excuses for both my uncle and Zina. We were a close family, she said, but not all people can be expected to be the same way. Also, with time, as Zina became more comfortable, she was certain that she would feel differently. In any case, as long as my uncle was happy she was prepared to respect Zina's wishes. My uncle, for his part, said nothing. The signals were mixed. There was what my grandmother said, but my mother also knew that he and Zina took a weekend trip together to Niagara-on-the-Lake and another to Quebec City. After Quebec City my uncle sported a new leather jacket and a gray Stetson. Whatever was happening between them he wasn't complaining.

I heard all of these things through my mother, but I also heard other things from Natasha. I now knew more about my uncle's life than I ever had, and certainly more than anyone else in my family. I knew, for instance, that he now spent as many nights on the living-room couch as he did in the bedroom. I knew that Zina was racking up long-distance bills to Moscow, calling Natasha's father, a drunk who had effectively abandoned them years ago. She called in the mornings as soon as my uncle left for work and made various and emphatic promises. Natasha had seen her father only infrequently as a child and was perfectly content to go the rest of her life without seeing him again. She could say the same thing about her mother. Essentially, since the age of eight she had been on her own. Going to school, coming home, cooking her own dinners, running around with friends. Zina, when not at work, had been chasing after Natasha's father or bringing random men into the apartment. As much as possible Natasha avoided her.

When Natasha was twelve, a friend told her about a man who had paid ten dollars for some pictures of her. The girl had gone and taken a shower in the man's bathroom, and he had not only paid her but also bought her dinner. He had promised her the same again if she could bring a friend. Ten dollars each for taking a shower. Natasha remembered thinking that the man had to be an idiot. She went, took her shower, and collected her ten dollars. There wasn't much to it, and it wasn't as boring as hanging out at her friend's apartment. And ten dollars was ten dollars. Zina hardly gave her anything, so it was good to have some of her own money.

After that man was another, who took pictures of her and some friends in the forest. He had them climb birch trees and lie down in a meadow. He asked some of the girls to hold hands and kiss each other. Another man took some photos of her

in her school uniform. None of these men touched her, but she told me she wouldn't have cared if they had. They were nice, and, if anything, she felt sorry for them.

All of this led eventually to a Soviet director who had gone from working at the Moscow studio to making pornographic movies for Western businessmen. The man had a dacha on the outskirts of the city and would send a car around to pick up Natasha and her friends. Some of these friends were girls, some boys. They would spend the day at the dacha eating, drinking, having a good time. At some point the director would shoot some movies of them. Aside from teenagers there were also older women. On the first day, Natasha watched the women have sex. She understood that doing it or not doing it was not a serious consideration. In the end, everyone did it. If not in movies, then somewhere else, and it made absolutely no difference one way or the other. The only thing about having sex at the dacha was that it was much more pleasant. The house was beautiful, and there was a large lawn and a forest. There was also a *banya* and a Jacuzzi. The filming itself didn't even take very long. The rest of the time they just relaxed. She was never asked to do anything she didn't want to do, and she never saw anyone else do something that she wouldn't have done herself. Even though she and her friends knew they wouldn't be at the dacha if it weren't for the movies, the sex never felt as though it were the focus. The director and the other men became their friends. They treated them very well. And if they wanted to sleep with the girls, the girls could see no reason why not. At the end of the day everyone got twenty-five dollars.

Natasha didn't have any of the pictures or movies. It wasn't like she was a model; she didn't keep a portfolio to show prospective photographers. In such endeavors, previous experience was not a virtue. And without having pictures around, there was no risk of Zina finding out. Not that she thought Zina would care, but she suspected her mother would want the money. When Zina

[illegible] around like a prize. It was my connection [illegible] Arkus fus's parties it allowed me to feel superior to the other stoner acolytes comparing Nietzsche to Bob Marley. I took Natasha to these parties, and she stood quietly listening to our incoherent and impassioned conversations. Later she would surprise me with just how much she had understood. By midsummer, if called upon, Natasha could answer basic questions and had learned enough to know when to tell someone to fuck off. My friends liked more than anything to hear Natasha say *fuck off* in her crisp Moscow accent. In crude canine fashion, they accepted Natasha as one of their own.

We coasted this way into August, when Zina appeared in our back yard one evening during dinner. The way she looked it was clear that something horrible was about to happen. My mother opened the sliding door, and Zina burst into our kitchen and inaccurately described what Natasha and I had been doing. Then screams, sobbing, and hysterics. I watched as my father wrenched Natasha's teeth from her mother's bloody hand. Zina let fly a torrent of invective, most of which I couldn't understand. But I understood enough to know that what was happening in the kitchen was nothing compared with what was to come. Zina threatened to call the police, to place an ad in the Russian newspaper, to personally knock on all of our neighbors' doors. Natasha thrashed in my father's grip and freed herself enough to lunge unsuccessfully for a bread knife. She shrieked that her mother was a liar. I sat in my chair, nauseated, contemplating lies and escape.

After my father bandaged Zina's hand, she waited outside while my mother talked with Natasha and me, fumbling for the proper way to pose the question. It was hard to believe that what Zina was saying was true, but why would she make something

like this up. Natasha said that it [illegible] because her mother hated her and [illegible] er wanted her to be happy. She [illegible] jealous that Natasha was happy with [illegible] and wanted to ruin it, just as she [illegible] dragged Natasha from Moscow ev[illegible] though she hadn't wanted to go. Z[illegible] hated her and wanted to ruin her l[illegible] that was all. When my mother turn[illegible] to me, I denied everything. Unl[illegible] Zina produced pictures or videc[illegible] wasn't admitting a thing. I was terrif[illegible] but I wasn't a moron.

When it became obvious that [illegible] had reached an impasse, my moth[illegible] called my uncle. He came to [illegible] house in a state of perturbation th[illegible] was remarkable even for him. He [illegible] down between my mother and Zi[illegible] on the living-room couch. I was b[illegible] side my father, who was in his ar[illegible] chair, and Natasha stood rigidly w[illegible] her back against the door. My un[illegible] confessed that he didn't know wh[illegible] was happening. Everything had be[illegible] fine. What situation doesn't ha[illegible] problems, but on the whole he w[illegible] content. The only explanation w[illegible] that all of this might have had to [illegible] with a fight between Zina a[illegible] Natasha over a phone bill. There h[illegible] been a very expensive bill to Russ[illegible] almost six hundred dollars, whi[illegible] Zina had said were calls to her mo[illegible] er. He could understand that wh[illegible] getting used to a new life Zina wou[illegible] want to talk to her mother. Also, h[illegible] mother was alone in Moscow a[illegible] missed her. It was only natural th[illegible] there would be calls. That there we[illegible] so many was unfortunately a fina[illegible] cial and not a personal problem. I[illegible] was within his means, he would [illegible] happy if Zina talked to her mother[illegible] much as she liked. But as it was, [illegible] had suggested that she try to be m[illegible] careful about the amount of time s[illegible] spent on the phone. They talk[illegible] about it and she said she understoo[illegible] It was then that Natasha had accus[illegible] Zina of lying to him. This started[illegible] fight. But at no point did he he[illegible] anything about me and Natasha. I[illegible] was certain it wasn't true and was j[illegible] something between a mother a[illegible] daughter. Everyone was still getti[illegible] used to things, and it would be a m[illegible] take to make too much of it. In a [illegible] or so everyone would calm down a[illegible] it would be forgotten.

nat night my uncle, Zina, and sha slept at our house. Natasha he guest room, Zina on the stairs couch, and my uncle on floor beside her. Zina refused to e the house without Natasha, Natasha refused to leave with ı. I was relegated to my base- t. In the morning, however, h as my uncle had suggested, asha calmed down. She showed ndication of the previous night's erics. Without resistance she ed to return home with Zina and uncle. Forgoing breakfast, the e of them walked out the door, her looking at nor touching one ther. As we watched them go, mother announced that she had seen enough craziness to last a ime. Whatever the truth, she w one thing for certain: Natasha I were kaput.

ut the next day I still expected I was alone in my basement, she with Zina—I couldn't under- d why she didn't come. Our af- noons could still be ours. My her's verdict didn't have to be yed between nine and five. Had situation been reversed, I would have disappointed her.

After several interminable hours, I e up and headed for Rufus's. A l company's van was parked out- , and I followed the sound of voic- nto the back yard, where I found us with the pool men discussing sible dimensions of a possible pool. us invited me to contribute to the berations. If the price was right, y could start digging tomorrow. I never known Rufus to be much of vimmer; on nights when some of other stoners and I would hop the ces of neighborhood pools, he ly participated.

—Do you even swim?

—Berman, nobody swims in these ngs. They're for floating. Fill them with plastic inflatables and free- ociate. Gentle swaying stimulates brainpan.

watched the pool guys pacing off st of his yard.

—Why not start with a hammock l work your way up?

—Sometimes I'm out here and I ed to take a leak. The weather's e. I want to stay out, but I need to pee. Just for that the pool would be worth the investment.

—You could pee on the bushes.

—I'm a suburban homeowner, there's a social contract. Pissing in the pool is fine, but whipping out your dick and irrigating the shrubbery is bad news. It's all about property value.

I settled back on the deck and waited for the pool guys to leave. I had no deliveries to make that morning, and I had neglected to bring along the books I was supposed to return. I was there without any veneer of pretext. After escorting the pool guys back to their van, Rufus joined me on the deck.

—Where's the girl?

—With her mother.

—I thought she hated her mother.

—She does.

—So what are you doing here? Go liberate her.

—It's forbidden.

—You're sixteen, everything is forbidden. The world expects you to disobey.

—I've been accused of unnatural acts.

—Society was founded on unnatural acts. Read the Bible. You start with Adam and Eve. After that, if somebody doesn't boink a sibling, it's end of story.

—You mind if I use that argument with my mother?

Rufus got up and looked out across his yard.

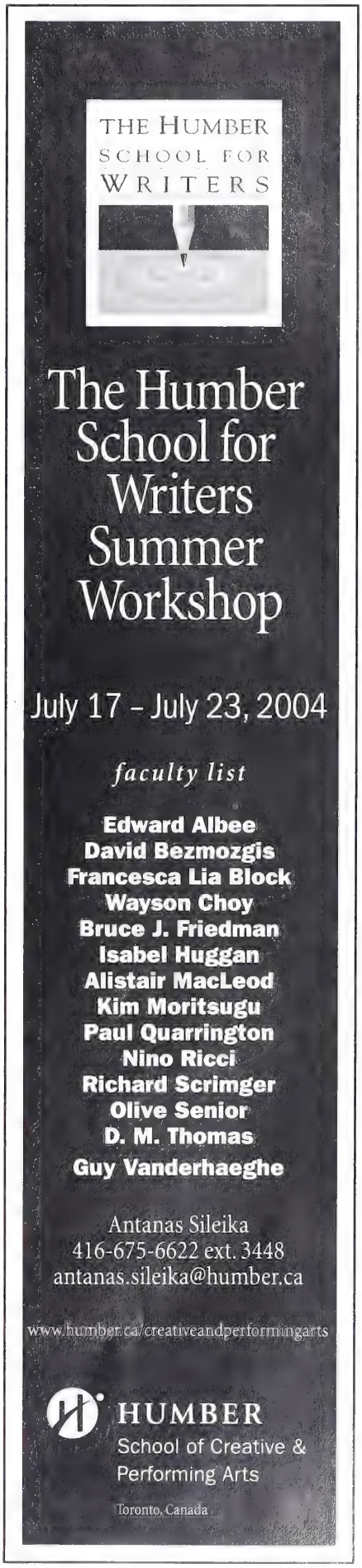
—What do you think about a hot tub?

—Instead of the pool?

—With the pool. Do everything in mosaic tile. Give it a real Greek feel. Put up some Doric columns. Get a little fountain. Eat grapes. Play Socrates.

He descended from the deck and walked to the corner of his yard and struck a pose that was either Socrates or the fountain. Our conversation was over.

From Rufus's I walked to my uncle's building and lurked until one old man was buzzed in by another old man. Eleven flights later I was in the hallway, passing the smells of other apartments. With one or two exceptions all the doorposts had mezuzahs, just like the hallways above and below. Everyone

conveniently [illegible]
houses and not Natasha.

I knocked on Zina's apartment door. She was wearing the same blue housedress. She blocked the doorway. I had prepared myself for the worst, but she seemed pleased to see me.

—I wanted to apologize on behalf of myself. I don't blame you for what happened. It wasn't your fault. She has turned grown men inside out, and you're just a boy. It was crazy to expect anything else. I know how weak men are. I am to blame. The life in Russia was like a disease to children. Natasha is a very sick girl.

Behind Zina I noticed a movement. Over her shoulder I could see Natasha at the far end of the apartment leaning against the couch. When I caught her eyes, they reflected nothing, no less remote than the first time I saw her at the airport. I couldn't discern if she was looking at me or the back of Zina's head. Sensing Natasha's presence, Zina turned to look at her daughter. When she looked back at me, her turning was a motion that included the closing of the door.

—It will be best for everybody if you didn't see Natasha anymore.

Late that night, after a day spent despairing over the black void that was the remainder of my summer and my life in general, I heard a knock on my basement window. By the sound of the knock I knew it was Natasha. I looked out and saw her squatting like a Vietnamese peasant in front of the window. In the dark it was hard to see her face. Upstairs in the kitchen I opened the sliding glass door and went into the yard. She was hugging her knees at the base of our pine tree; her suitcase, the same one I had seen at the airport, was lying beside her. When I got close enough, I could see that she had been crying. I joined her on the grass. Already, after only one day apart and remembering the way she had looked at me over Zina's shoulder, I didn't feel as though I could touch her.

—You listened to her lies. Why did you listen to her lies?

—What was I supposed to do?

—You could have knocked her down. You could have broken down the door.

—And what then?

—I don't know. Something. Something else would have happened. But you left me alone with her.

—You looked right at me. Why didn't you say anything?

—But I already told you everything. You saw how she tried to ruin my life and your life, and how she was killing your uncle. You knew all of this, but you didn't do anything. You're like your uncle. You want people to make decisions for you.

Natasha picked at the grass. Tears welled up in her eyes. She let them fall. I got up and picked up her suitcase. It felt empty. I made a move toward the house.

—What are you doing?

—Taking it inside.

—I can't go inside. I can't stay here. I have to leave.

—You have to leave tonight?

—Do you want to come with me?

—Where?

—Florida. One of the businessmen who came to the dacha lives there. He is very rich. He promised that if I ever came to Florida he would give me a job. He'll give you one too.

—We have to decide this tonight?

—Yes. I can't stay here and I can't go home. There is no more home. My mother has left your uncle. I can't live with her and I can't stay with him. I have nowhere to go.

—What do you mean your mother left my uncle?

—I forced them to decide.

I put the suitcase back down.

—She made him sleep on the couch again. I went out to the living room. At first he was asleep, but when he woke up and understood what was happening, he didn't stop me. He knew whose mouth it was. And then she heard and came out of the bedroom. He needed me to do it that way or he would never have gotten away from her. I wasn't going to let her ruin his life. I wasn't going to let her win.

Strangely, my first thought was about my grandmother. My next thought was that my uncle would kill himself.

—He let her insult him, embarrass him, steal his money. But he wouldn't leave her. He was a coward. So I gave him a coward's reason to leave. It's funny, other men would have felt the opposite way. They would have taken it as a reason to stay and would have spent the n[illegible] two years fucking me.

I helped Natasha down into [illegible] basement and promised her tha[illegible] would wake her before my pare[illegible] got up. I gave her my bed and sl[illegible] on the floor. When the alarm ran[illegible] dug out all the money I had and g[illegible] it to her. It amounted to a little m[illegible] than a hundred dollars. I watch[illegible] her drag her suitcase down our stre[illegible] heading toward the [illegible] station and Florida.

When my parents woke up, [illegible] phones were already ringing. [illegible] uncle had arrived on my grandp[illegible] ents' doorstep at seven in the mo[illegible] ing. His marriage was over. As [illegible] why the separation had to be [illegible] drastic, why he couldn't stay in t[illegible] apartment until he found a n[illegible] place, my uncle was vague. Th[illegible] could no longer live together. N[illegible] body in my family asked abo[illegible] Natasha or even knew that she w[illegible] gone. As far as the family was co[illegible] cerned, once my uncle severed [illegible] relationship with Zina, she a[illegible] Natasha ceased to exist.

For days afterward I stayed in [illegible] basement. I had no interest in go[illegible] out, making deliveries, checki[illegible] messages. I was compromised [illegible] everything I knew. I knew thi[illegible] about my uncle that a sixteen-ye[illegible] old nephew should not have kno[illegible] And when my mother invited him [illegible] our house for dinner—in an effort [illegible] bolster his spirits—I sat across t[illegible] table from him and tried to suppr[illegible] the feeling of an awkward bond. [illegible] wasn't the sort of bond I wanted [illegible] share with my forty-four-year-old u[illegible] cle, especially under the circu[illegible] stances. But everything he did dur[illegible] dinner—talking, eating, drinking[illegible] reminded me that he had been w[illegible] Natasha. The mouth he spoke wi[illegible] the hands he ate with, his physi[illegible] self, were the same mouth, han[illegible] self that had been with her.

During dinner he avoided the s[illegible] ject of Zina and Natasha entirely [illegible] was the only thing on everyon[illegible] mind, and so, characteristically [illegible] was the only thing nobody me[illegible] tioned. Instead, my uncle gave a v[illegible] long and detailed history of t[illegible] Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arafa[illegible]

n, Ben-Gurion, Balfour, Begin, er, Sadat. I wondered what kept going. What life offered him. he didn't kill himself. Watchim, listening to him talk, I realized that there was nothing I could do for him.

The following morning I ended my mposed seclusion and took the far walk to Rufus's. There were s to read and whatever else the of my summer still had to offer. At s's house guys with wheelbarrows carting dirt out from the yard and eling it into a truck. Another crew ıldered ten-foot-long Doric mns in the opposite direction. The ns of Bizet's *Carmen* wafted through air. The neighborhood had never anything like it.

ı the back yard I spotted most of riends. Guys that had never held n a real job, guys like me who spent r days in basements reading, smokand engaging in self-abuse. They e fanned out across Rufus's yard, ning, digging, smoothing, lifting, by side with the workmen around assive hole bordered by a plastic ıge fence. They looked very happy, nately involved.

lp on the deck, with one of the l guys, Rufus was hunched over a eprint as though it were a battle ı. I mounted the steps and stood ind Rufus and waited for him to nowledge me. Over his shoulder I ld see the plan: columns, trees, a ıtain, the hot tub. When he fiy saw me his face for an instant as-ed an expression I had never seen ore. Later I recognized it as pity.

–Berman, what's the matter, you 't return calls anymore?

Ie rose and had me follow him n into the yard. I felt the onset lread. It was then that I realized t none of my friends had spoken ne. The yard was busy, but not so y that they wouldn't have seen I had, after all, seen them. The ı of these impressions began to ister. I knew that whatever it , it was very bad, and that I was pped and incapable of avoiding damage. I sensed all of this as I cended from the deck and heard screen door open. Using her hip, tasha slid it closed. She was carrying a tray with a pitcher of water and multicolored plastic glasses. Rufus watched me for a reaction, and then took me gently by the shoulder out to the front of the house.

—Berman, this is why I asked you to call. I wanted to tell you on the phone, but it wasn't exactly the sort of thing I could leave on an answering machine.

Another team of landscapers approached us with a Doric column. I felt a compulsion to stick out my foot and trip them. To start a brawl, draw blood, break bones.

—She doesn't want to see you. I'm sorry about this, Berman. It's just the way it is.

I made way for the column.

—How much do those things weigh?

—Not as much as you'd think. They're masonry and plaster, not marble. If they were marble, I'd need slaves.

—I thought she was going to Florida.

—Come on, Berman, she's a fucking kid. How is she supposed to get to Florida? She barely speaks English. Either she's here or she's on the street.

—Right.

—She thinks you betrayed her. She's very principled. Anyway, she'll be safe here.

—That's one way to look at it.

—I hope you're not mad. It's not personal.

—I still have some of your books and maybe a few grams of weed.

—That's cool. Don't sweat it. Consider them yours.

—What a great deal for me.

—That's a shitty attitude, Berman. You're smarter than that.

—I'm a fucking genius.

—Take care of yourself, Berman.

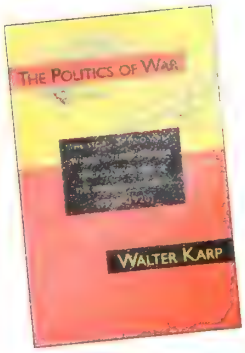
I lingered in front of Rufus's house after he left and watched the wheelbarrows come and go. I waited for the workmen to bring in the last of the columns and then walked home. In another country, under another code, it would have been my duty to return to Rufus's with a gun. But in the suburbs, at the end of my sixteenth summer, this was not an option. Instead, I resorted to a form of civilized murder. By the time I reached my street everyone in Rufus's yard was dead. Rufus, Natasha, my stoner friends. I would never see them again. By the time I got home I had already crafted a new identity. I would switch schools, change my wardrobe, move to another city. Later I would avenge myself with beautiful women, learn martial arts, and cultivate exotic experiences. I saw my future clearly. I had it all planned out. And yet, standing in our back yard, drawn by a strange impulse, I crouched and peered through the window into my basement. I had never seen it from this perspective. I saw what Natasha must have seen every time she came to the house. It was the end of my subterranean life. ■

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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## EIL, PRINCE OF JSH

***y the latest outrage by a ident's brother has provoked ttle outrage***

n bygone decades, profiteering presidential brothers evoked national indignation, their misduct symbolizing not merely the ion of our civic virtue but the onal deficiencies of their electiblings. Richard M. Nixon's paru image was only reinforced by eventual disclosure that Don on in 1956 had borrowed 5,000 from Howard Hughes for ne of "Nixonburgers." The wisn of entrusting the White House Georgia peanut farmer was reted when, in the late 1970s, Bil-Carter became a lobbyist for ya and introduced his own line Billy" beer. Bill Clinton, admitly, had only a half brother, but ger Clinton's general turpitude—drug conviction, his soliciting ney with promises of presidential dons—seemed to parallel his ni-sibling's emergence as the first sident to be fellated by a White use intern in the Oval Office and have his DNA tested for a (unted) paternity suit.

What, then, to make of the lack national outrage over the latest ngs of Neil Bush, brother of the rent President? Of Neil's current tures in crony capitalism, it is d to know which is the less seemly. Made public last November, as part of the messy divorce proceedings against his wife, Sharon, was a contract between Neil and China's Grace Semiconductor firm, according to which Neil was to be paid more than $400,000 per year to serve on Grace's board and to offer it "expertized advices." (Grace's cofounder, Jiang Mianheng, just happens to be the son of former Chinese



president Jiang Zemin.) A second contract documented Neil's $60,000-per-year consultancy to Crest Investments, whose top partners, John Howland and Jamal Daniel, also are principals of New Bridge Strategies, the well-wired Houston firm seeking to cash in through lobbying and advisory services to corporations hoping for contracts to rebuild war-torn Iraq. Also made public in the divorce proceedings were Neil's eyebrow-raising "sex romps" through Asia, where attractive women would frequently turn up outside his hotel-room door to solace him in his loneliness.

But yesteryear's civic disdain seems to have been displaced by European-style cynicism. The press has greeted the revelations with the sort of idle fascination that the British tabloids display toward the marital and business follies of the non-reigning royals. In fact, the comparison to the British monarchy is hardly far-fetched. The Bushes became America's quasi-royal family in 2000, when George H.W. Bush was succeeded, after an eight-year interregnum, by his eldest son. The notion of an American imperium, bolstered by military conquests in the Middle East, likewise created a role for an imperial family. Following the White House success in the 2002 midterm elections, during which the invasion of Iraq had been all but proclaimed, the *New York Times* offered a regal analogy: that it was "hardly too early to examine the nature of the Bush dynasty, and why—at the moment at least—it has largely escaped the antagonism that led the founders to fear any hereditary power or titles." The lack of outrage at Neil Bush's exploits would lend support to such a theory of neo-dynastic emergence, in which Neil has come to be seen, in the eyes of the public, not as a mere presidential brother but as something akin to a hereditary royal. Princes will be princes, after all—

trations by Michael Witte

and it's not as if anything else unusual thing about it anyway.

In a family of avowed [illegible] Neil's brush with the [illegible] Exploration, which [illegible] primarily explored the [illegible] of Colorado G. [illegible] Ken Good [illegible] invest in commodities, and Bill Walters [illegible] credit ($1.5 million) that paid Neil's salary. After Neil became a director of the Denver-based Silverado Savings & Loan in 1985, he managed to secure $200 million in loans—before long in default—for Good and Walters while not seeing fit to disclose his own relationships to them. After Silverado went bankrupt, Neil set up Apex Energy with a personal investment of $3,000, which was fattened by a $2.3 million loan guarantee from the federal Small Business Association. Like JNB earlier, Apex failed, leaving only minor assets to repay the large SBA-guaranteed loan, most of which had to be shouldered by taxpayers. From there, he set up another vehicle, Interlink Management, which sought business opportunities for U.S. firms in the Far East. Interlink was half owned by Thailand's wealthy CP Group, the same company that later got in trouble for trying to buy influence in the Clinton Administration through large contributions to the Democratic Party. Through Interlink, Neil earned more than $1 million from the CP Group alone for introductions and advice.

When the elder George Bush was simply a first-term elected president, the misadventures of his third son were no laughing matter. In 1990 the Silverado scandal was front-page news for an entire year. As Silverado slid toward a billion-dollar bankruptcy and a federal bailout, *Time* magazine wrote of "mounting public fury" against Neil Bush, while a *Newsweek* poll reported that seven in ten Americans considered his misdeeds to be "very" or "somewhat" damaging to his father's reputation. The commentator Edward Luttwak [illegible] shook his fist at Iraq's invasion of Kuwait [illegible] phumgraphs of Saddam Hussein replacing those of Neil Bush [illegible] Bush *père* was defeated for reelection [illegible]

Since George W. Bush restored his family to the White House in 2000, however, the tenor of national discussion of such business dealings seems to have become far more easy going. When the Grace Semiconductor deal was revealed, the *New York Times* ran the story on page 28; the *Washington Post* relegated it to the Style section. Not even Neil's "sex romps" elicited the mocking media drumbeat that greeted Don Nixon or Billy Carter or, for that matter, Neil's own, earlier misdeeds. It was as if the nature of the misbehavior itself had metamorphosed. What once had been perceived as an insult to the republic now was regarded with a tolerant "boys will be boys" approach. The reason, of course, is that Neil Bush could no longer be dismissed out of hand, as Don or Billy or Roger were. Other presidential families may come and go, but the Bushes are here to stay—even their perceived black sheep.

In fact, all four Bush brothers have engaged in such behavior throughout much of their adult lives, long before they attained princely status. Many Americans will remember that our current President cut his own Neil-like commercial swath through the Texas (and Persian Gulf) of the late 1970s and 1980s. Some of the 1977–79 financing for George W. Bush's first unsuccessful oil venture, Arbusto, came from two rich Saudi families—the Bin Mahfouzes and the Bin Ladens—by way of Texan James Bath, their North American representative, and the 1980s buyout of his oil business by Harken Energy revealed a half dozen connections to the shady Bank of Credit and Commerce International. In the 1989 buyout and reorganization of the Texas Rangers b[illegible] ball team, the taxpayers of Arli[illegible] ton, Texas, wound up having to [illegible] off an expensive local bond iss[illegible] which, arguably, had been flo[illegible] for the private purposes of Geo[illegible] W. and his partners.

Jeb Bush, today the governor [illegible] Florida, kicked off his own busi[illegible] career in the early 1980s, around [illegible] time his father became vice pr[illegible] dent, by locating in the Miami a[illegible] and trading on the family's Cub[illegible] émigré, C.I.A., Iran-Contra, a[illegible] federal-government-program c[illegible] nections. Jeb's entanglements [illegible] cluded a business association w[illegible] Camilo Padreda, who later plea[illegible] guilty to defrauding the Departm[illegible] of Housing and Urban Developm[illegible] of millions of dollars. Jeb also [illegible] ceived a $75,000 real-estate fee fr[illegible] Miguel Recarey, the onetime hea[illegible] International Medical Centers, w[illegible] was determined to have defraud[illegible] the federal Medicare progr[illegible] through overcharging, false invo[illegible] ing, and embezzlement. In 200[illegible] Florida pump company with wh[illegible] Jeb Bush had been associated w[illegible] charged with using $28 million o[illegible] $74 million loan by the U.S. Expo[illegible] Import Bank to pay bribes to Nig[illegible] ian officials and grease the palms [illegible] company insiders.

Meanwhile, Marvin, the le[illegible] known, youngest brother, has a his[illegible] ry of business relationships with t[illegible] emirate of Kuwait, where his father[illegible] course is regarded as a national savi[illegible] From the early 1990s until 200[illegible] Marvin was a director of KuwAm, t[illegible] Kuwait-American Corporation, alo[illegible] with Mishal Yousef Saud Al Sabah[illegible] member of the Kuwaiti royal fami[illegible] He was also a director of Fresh D[illegible] Monte, the giant fruit compa[illegible] owned by Kuwait's Abu-Ghazal[illegible] family. Securacom, another Kuwai[illegible] connected company at which Marv[illegible] was a director, had a pre–Septemb[illegible] 11 contract for the security of Ma[illegible] hattan's World Trade Center.

The family's three generations [illegible] office seekers have preferred that t[illegible] average voter remain convinced th[illegible] the Bushes save pennies, go to pub[illegible]

or-high schools, and interview obs just like everyone else. Far it. Cutting lucrative insider s is essentially the family busi—what political Bushes have e since Sam Bush succeeded k Rockefeller as president of keye Steel in 1908 and George Walker teamed up with Union fic railroad heir Averell Harri- on Wall Street in 1919. It is as e Bushes and others like them ume a political and financial en- ment, a latter-day version of the lal droit du seigneur. The prob- with Prince Neil, alas, is not he is a black sheep but rather he is a true scion of the House ush.

—*Kevin Phillips*

## FOUR-YEAR LAGUE

***sident Bush's anti-environmental nda has succeeded not in leaps but nches***

George W. Bush and his administration have made a number of high-profile attempts to weaken environmental protection in the United States. Bush's eagerness to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is well known; his Clear Skies Initiative would have debilitated the popular Clean Air Act, and his 2002 energy bill heavily favored consumption over conservation. Such major legislative efforts, however, have been largely repulsed in either Congress or the courts. But far more significant and effective has been a series of small-scale measures, most of them enacted by the executive branch through the EPA, the Interior Department, and other federal agencies. The media have provided little coverage of these maneuvers, which, individually, are limited in scope and often bound up in arcane detail difficult for Tom Brokaw to summarize in a two-minute segment. Taken as a group, however, these measures may well pose a greater long-term hazard to environmental protection than would have any of the more public proposals put forth by the administration.

Roughly, five tactics have been employed: outright *rollbacks*, in which rules instituted under previous administrations are weakened or reversed entirely; *exemptions*, in which special exceptions to laws or rules are made for certain lands or polluters; *revoked protections* on natural resources that previously were safeguarded; the "*streamlining*" of agency decisions; and *reduced enforcement*.

*Rollbacks*

The rollbacks—which the Natural Resources Defense Council has numbered at more than 200—began on the administration's first day in office, when Chief of Staff Andrew Card suspended regulations passed in the final days of the Clinton Administration, including rules on sewage discharge, air-conditioner efficiency, and roadless areas, among others. The air-conditioner standard, which called for a 30 percent reduction in energy use, was eliminated and replaced two years later with a weaker



standard; the sewage-discharge rule is still suspended, and the general flow of waste has been further abetted by budget cuts. The roadless rule, which halted the building of new roads in one third of the U.S. Forest Service's holdings, was later reinstated by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals—although, like many court decisions made against the administration, this one has had less practical meaning than might be expected because the administration has been successful in its efforts to gut the rule regardless (see "Exemptions," below).

Air- and water-pollution standards have been compromised across the board. Unable to replace the Clean Air Act, the administration settled on revising the New Source Review section of the act, which controls how industrial facilities and utilities may upgrade their plants. Central to the effectiveness of the act, the New Source Review was practically eliminated by the new language. In a related move by the EPA, mercury is no longer classified as a "hazardous air pollutant" and is now allowed to be treated in the same manner as less toxic forms of smog or soot. The administration has fought to allow Mexican trucks, generally diesel-powered and meeting few environmental standards, to travel freely on U.S. roads and has appealed the Ninth Circuit's decision that the rule change must wait for an environmental study.

As for water, the administration has severely weakened a rule requiring the federal government to oversee "non-point" pollution sources, which include runoff from lawns, roads, and parking lots, and are the leading cause of water pollution. The rule was enacted after states proved unwilling or unable to oversee the pollution themselves. Also removed were proscriptions against the dumping of mining waste into streams, facilitating projects such as a proposed mine in Martin County, Kentucky, which is slated to fill twenty-six separate valleys with mountaintops, erasing six and a half miles of streams in the process. In all, when the fine print has had its way, the EPA expects about 1,000 miles of streams to be buried in the next decade.

The rules governing the protection of public lands have been variously impaired. The Bureau of Land Manage-

ment has revoked grazing restrictions designed to moderate overuse of public lands and [illegible] system that, among other things, [illegible] away public water [illegible] and restricts public involvement [illegible] decisions. Logging [illegible] need to sustain [illegible] species, [illegible] enough trees were [illegible] ecosystem [illegible] drilling, as well as on mining, have been severely weakened or dropped. The BLM has unilaterally relinquished its power to block mines that would cause "substantial irreparable harm" to the environment—suggesting strongly that "substantial irreparable harm" is a perfectly acceptable outcome for private activities on publicly owned land. The agency also has increased the amount of land a mine can use for a waste dump and has lifted moratoriums on mining in numerous sensitive wilderness areas. Not coincidentally, mining and drilling applications have ballooned. In Wyoming's Powder River Basin alone, the BLM has approved 40,000 new wells, the largest natural-gas field ever approved by the department.

*Exemptions*

Where the administration has had trouble revoking rules or passing legislation, it has been masterful at devising exemptions. Joan Mulhern of the public-interest law firm Earthjustice likens the White House to a chess player who, finding himself in a bad position, simply plucks the threatening piece off the board. This tactic, used with powerful effect in the matter of the roadless rule, enabled the administration to exempt all of Alaska's national forests, including the Tongass rain forest. Furthermore, the administration has announced its intention to let state governors opt out of the roadless rule entirely.

The administration has also asked that forest planning be excluded from public review, encouraged the Pentagon to ask Congress to remove its liability for toxic cleanups at military bases, and pressed to exempt fuel-additive manufacturers from liability for groundwater contamination. It has [illegible] exempted the oil and gas industries from new EPA rules covering water discharge from construction sites, [illegible] Water conformation on the latter on threatening condition that the farms must write their own pollution control policies.

*[illegible] protections*

Beyond exemptions, the administration has made every effort to remove land from protection while remaining the first administration in a century not to set any new territory aside. More than 6 million acres were removed from wilderness consideration in Utah alone, in a settlement struck between Utah and the BLM—less a settlement, really, than a voluntary capitulation on the part of the BLM. In the same settlement, the BLM renounced outright its power to study and identify new wilderness areas, halting not only the present but all future protection of lands. As for the oceans, the administration is working to remove the outer 197 miles of the nation's proprietary 200-mile radius of coastal waters from consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act, which requires environmental-impact studies and public review. The White House also has moved to reinterpret the language of the Clean Water Act, removing protection for "isolated waters," which include countless ponds, streams, and wetlands.

The list goes on. National Forest tracts under 250 acres are no longer subject to public comment before logging or sale; 50,000 acres of the Algodones Dunes in California and Arizona are now open to dune buggies, despite the fact that more than 70,000 acres of dunes were already available to off-roaders. And the White House has moved to allow snowmobilers into Yellowstone National Park, despite overwhelming public sentiment against the decision.

*"Streamlining"*

The administration frequently touts its "streamlining" of bureaucratic decision-making. The net effect, of course, is to ease access to public lands, especially for deve[illegible] ment interests of the oil and gas [illegible] suasion. The BLM has gran[illegible] almost universal waivers to "stip[illegible] tions" formerly attached to gas [illegible] oil leases, and has failed to req[illegible] many new ones. These stipulati[illegible] once limited activities that ha[illegible] wildlife or the environment—[illegible] suits such as driving trucks along [illegible] beach in Texas's Padre Island [illegible] tional Seashore during turtle-n[illegible] ing season.

Nor is the Forest Service still [illegible] quired to consult with Fish and Wil[illegible] Service biologists—who tend to we[illegible] in on the side of fish and wildlife—[illegible] fore giving the go-ahead to proje[illegible] Such "streamlining," combined w[illegible] the rollbacks, has helped to put throu[illegible] plans for the largest timber sale si[illegible] the 1930s, with more than 500 m[illegible] lion board feet slated to be taken ou[illegible] the Siskiyou National Forest. As [illegible] local claims to roads passing throu[illegible] public lands, the Department of t[illegible] Interior has issued policy memoran[illegible] offering bulk "disclaimers of intere[illegible] which may amount to thousands [illegible] miles of essentially new roads cr[illegible] crossing public lands, not only harm[illegible] them but making them very hard [illegible] protect in the future should the BL[illegible] ever reassert its right to do so.

*Reduced enforcement*

In 2002, then-EPA director Chr[illegible] tine Whitman openly suggested th[illegible] polluters involved in lawsuits would [illegible] unwise to settle. Her advice has prov[illegible] sound. The number of criminal cas[illegible] brought by the EPA has declined by [illegible] percent since the Clinton Admin[illegible] tration; inspections of polluters ha[illegible] declined by 15 percent, and, mo[illegible] tellingly, violation notices over[illegible] have dropped 58 percent. Last N[illegible] vember the EPA announced that [illegible] was dropping its investigations in[illegible] more than fifty power plants. Th[illegible] agency's enforcement staff is at its lo[illegible] est level ever, and many senior agen[illegible] have quit. As Rich Biondi, when h[illegible] resigned from the EPA's air-enforc[illegible] ment division, explained to the *Ne[illegible] York Times*, "The rug was pulled o[illegible] from under us." By February 2003 th[illegible]

nistration had cut 200 compli- and enforcement positions, large- rough attrition.

The effects of all these decisions will extend well beyond the term of the present administra- whether it is four years or eight. only has Bush policy set a confus- recedent for courts; it also has dis- aged compliance by regulated com- es and individuals, who are well e that enforcement has been gut- Should a future administration at- t to return government to a pro- ve role, it will face the formidable of untangling these precedents. It will have to reverse the exodus of petent staff, the budget cuts to y agency, and the institutionaliza- of careless but convenient science. n all of this, the public has gone ly unconsulted, and with reason: n voters, Republican and Demo- alike, are asked for their opinions he environment, they are heavily vor of protecting it. It remains to een whether the divisiveness of ain campaign issues, such as gay riage and the war on terror, will tinue to obscure the public's wish- egarding the environment, one of few matters on which it agrees.

*—Bryant Urstadt*

## ARBON NATION

***m coast to coast, federally fund- cientists race to capture $CO_2$***

In March 2001, when George W. Bush announced that the Unit- ed States would "unsign" the 1997 oto Protocol, which aimed to limit amount of carbon dioxide released o Earth's atmosphere, he did offer vironmentalists one unswerving mise: despite its abandonment of treaty, the United States would, he l, continue "working with our allies reduce greenhouse gases." It would m that, in the ensuing years, Bush done little to fulfill this promise. Or s he? In a little-known program— e that may, in fact, be the adminis- tration's only substantive project to reduce levels of airborne $CO_2$—the Department of Energy has allocated $110 million for research into "carbon sequestration," a tantalizing process by which, rather than curtailing the use of oil and coal, the carbon-dioxide emissions from them could simply be captured and disposed of after the fact. The DOE has mobilized the nation's top scientists to find ways of storing this carbon-dioxide waste here on Earth, in everything from empty oil wells to genetically engineered plants. Like the Manhattan Project scientists in the 1940s, these tireless genius-patriots are racing to win a war: the climate's attack on our unfettered use of fossil fuels. Seldom has the imagination of our nation's scientists been spurred to such lengths.

Last summer, along the banks of the Ohio River near New Haven, West Virginia, researchers from Battelle Memorial Institute drilled down 9,200 feet to reach one of North America's largest underground saline reservoirs: a pit of waterlogged sandstone stretching from western Pennsylvania to Wisconsin. Should geologic tests prove favorable, the DOE-funded scientists will inject into the reservoir thousands of tons of $CO_2$ that has been compressed to a "supercritical" state—almost as dense as liquid. Released nearly two miles below Earth's surface, the carbon dioxide will drift gradually upward through the porous rock, eventually forming a tremendous bubble below the reservoir's thin carbonate cap.

A leak in the cap could prove perilous. Vented to the surface, a carbon-dioxide plume could kill trees, wildlife, or even people—as happened eighteen years ago in Cameroon, when a giant bubble of $CO_2$ escaped from a volcanic lake and asphyxiated 1,700 residents. But should the cap hold, the prize is formidable indeed. This reservoir alone could eventually be made to store 200 million tons of carbon dioxide, almost twenty times what the United States produces each year. The Department of Energy is so enthusiastic about the prospect, in fact, that it has already begun scouting for additional, smaller reservoirs in Texas, New Mexico, and Wyoming.

In the long term, though, even these receptacles will fill, leading some scientists to eye an even grander repository: the ocean, nature's sink, which already lovingly sponges billions of tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. At the DOE's Center for Research on Ocean Carbon Sequestration, in California, researchers hope to force the sea to digest even more. Some envision pipes, running from the flues of seaside refineries, that pour $CO_2$ toward the sea floor like bubbles blown through colossal straws. Others imagine a more ambitious scenario, in which carbon dioxide could be pumped even deeper—several miles down—where it would emerge not as a gas but as a hydrate, an icelike solid.

Hoping to test the latter idea, a team of scientists operating off the coast of Monterey, California, used a remote-controlled rover to pour liquefied carbon dioxide into a beaker two miles below the ocean surface. The results were unexpected. Reacting with the seawater, the $CO_2$ quickly destabilized and swelled to four times its original size, overflowing the beaker before settling in a jellylike mass on the sand. Although a curious fish nosed the blob with no ill effect, researchers began to worry about how marine life might be affected by such deposits, which, in a full-scale disposal project, could form slowly dissolving gelatinous masses thousands of feet across. To assess this danger, the same team of researchers recently suctioned several dozen urchins and fish off the ocean floor and put them in a corral, next to a tube of carbon-dioxide hydrate. Although the experiment was videotaped, it unfortunately proved inconclusive: due to tides, the animals were never exposed to a steady stream of $CO_2$. Footage revealed that several urchins died, but many of the more mobile animals managed to escape, the state of their health sadly unrecorded.

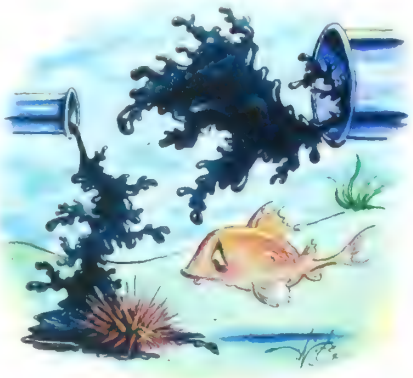
Of course, the fate of a few urchins pales in comparison to the promise of the ocean as a carbon-dioxide haven. If researchers can overcome the nig-

gling environmental issues related to large-scale ocean sequestration—including potentially dangerous levels of acidity, which are already being seen as natural $CO_2$ absorption has increased with global warming—they we might be able to transform [illegible] into carbon-dioxide treasuries, enabling us to [illegible] much as a million years to come.

And yet our underground aquifers, and even our oceans, can take us only so far. Carbon dioxide deposited through such methods must have been contained from the outset, so that it can later be compressed for disposal—a strategy that is practical only for $CO_2$ emitted by large sources, such as factories or refineries. But half of the planet's excess $CO_2$ comes from diffuse sources, such as cars. In order to sequester that, scientists will need a way to remove the offending gas directly from the air.

At Los Alamos National Laboratory, in the deserts of New Mexico, work is already under way for a facility to do just that. Scientists there are planning a monumental grove of rotating, 300-foot-tall synthetic trees that would function as a kind of atmospheric kitty litter, absorbing $CO_2$ from the air and binding it as a solid. On one side of the trees—which would actually look more like football goalposts, strung with Venetian blinds—giant plastic blades would direct incoming wind onto a filter being doused with a steadily refreshed solution of sodium hydroxide. The resulting by-product, sodium carbonate, would be scraped out and heated in order to free the carbon dioxide, which would then be compressed for storage in an aquifer.

The august Los Alamos lab, birthplace of the atomic bomb, seems to view this as another project for the ages: its April 2002 press release announcing the project bore the eye-opening title "Imagine no restrictions on fossil-fuel usage and no global warming!" Indeed, according to Columbia University researcher Klaus Lackner, who is collaborating on the project, a mere 20,000 of these mammoth, carbon-dioxide-sucking synthetic trees, [illegible] hundred, would be enough to absorb the $CO_2$ emissions of all the gasoline-powered cars in the country. Cover the entire [illegible] he notes, and the trees would theoretically absorb enough gas to account for every driver in the world. Although Manvendra Dubey, a colleague of Lackner's at Los Alamos, initially thought that the synthetic trees could be placed only in deserts—because the $CO_2$-depleted air might harm



any actual trees downwind—Lackner is now hopeful that the facilities can be more widely located. Even a highly tuned "tree," he reasons, would probably remove only at most half of the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, in which case plants in the vicinity would simply be smaller.

Meanwhile, in Rockville, Maryland, an unassuming suburb of the nation's capital, scientists at the Institute for Biological Energy Alternatives are plotting the most ambitious carbon-sequestration scheme of all. Captained by Craig Venter, the biologist who decoded the human genome, and funded with $9 million from the DOE, these pioneers are planning to create the ultimate carbon-sequestration machine: a synthetic microbe that will eat carbon dioxide and excrete it as fuel.

The project does face a major practical hurdle. Even the most exotic bacteria found in nature have metabolisms that are too slow to carry out such waste-conversion projects on a human scale. To sidestep this problem, Venter plans to isolate the genetic pathways that foster carbon-dioxide consu tion and methane production, and t optimize them to create an orgai custom-built to process the maxin amount of $CO_2$. Several bacteria l already been found with the abilit convert $CO_2$ into methane and drogen; Venter intends to const bacteria with the same ability but n more times the productivity. In a step toward realizing this dream, entists from the institute recer stitched together a small artificial v using forty-two sections of gene bo from scientific-supply stores.

Critics of the project worry t such an artificial microbe could i trate the ecosystem, evolve, and c to dominate its naturally occurr kin. But one wonders if this is not fact, the DOE's intention: that n ticellular organisms would eventu arise from the microbes and assu control of our civilization. After devastation from carbon sequestrat itself—the fatal carbon-diox plumes, the inhospitably acidic s the $CO_2$-depleted deserts, the out control synthetic bacteria—such c tures might very well be the only o to survive; and their eventual do nance would, in fact, provide a pl sible rationale for the administrati energy policy as a whole. A policy t promotes the burning of irreplace resources at the expense of the mate makes perfect sense if desig for a world not of humans but posthumans, who eat carbon diox and shit coal.

—*Jennifer K*

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*Kevin Phillips is the author, most cently, of* American Dynasty: A tocracy, Fortune, and the Politics Deceit in the House of Bush, *p lished in January by Viking.*

*Bryant Urstadt's last article for* Ha er's Magazine, *"Unhappy Trails," peared in the February issue.*

*Jennifer Kahn is a contributing edito* Wired. *Her work has been anthologi in* Best American Science Writ 2003 *and* 2004.

# EW BOOKS

*John Leonard*



bout Dostoevsky, V. S. Pritchett told us: "Life stories of endless complexity hang shamey out of the mouths of his acters, like dogs' tongues, as they by; the awful gregariousness of his le appears simultaneously with the trophobia and the manias of their ude." How odd, or how Russian, that the Soviet Union is no longer us and the windows are suddenly , that the same thing can be said t the State Archive of the Russian ration (GARF), the State Archive Social and Political History ASPI), the Central Archives of Ministry of Defense (TSAMO), the complete files of the VD/KGB/MGB, with their min- of every interrogation and their es of every confession—life stoclaustrophobias, ias, solitudes.

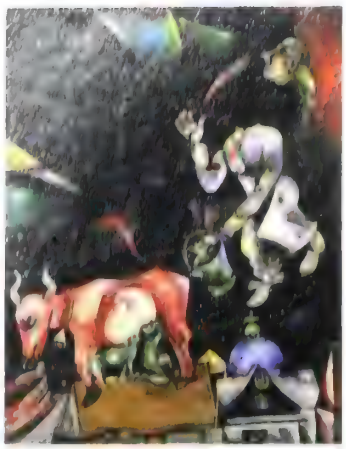


ogging the dictarom 1929 till his h in 1953, Simon ag Montefiore's LIN: THE COURT THE RED TSAR opf, $30) harvests paper trail. ich isn't to say ntefiore hasn't sumed memoirs grilled survivors; but the shameness (and the complicity) is in the hives. Stalin—brutal, charming, ewd, sarcastic, paranoid—can be n drinking soup, singing songs, and ing Svetlana, when he isn't arrestpoets, collectivizing agriculture, or erminating kulaks. But while he y complain to Nadya, his suicidal wife, that he is "as lonely as a horned owl," he is seldom without company in a Kremlin as cozy as a village—a Molotov, a Beria, a Zhdanov, a Mikoyan, with their noisy wives and difficult children, in and out of one another's apartments as if they were college dorms; their protégés and sycophants, selling out a father here, a brother there, an old friend or an ex-boss; generals fresh from a front and technocrats from a factory, on their way to Lubyanka.

"You lost faith" is the accusation Stalin instructed Vishinsky to emphasize in the 1937 show trials. Earlier in the Terror, the secret policeman Yezhov explained: "When you chop wood, chips fly." Not just Stalin but all of them somehow believed the incredible confessions they tortured out of their Bolshevik comrades: lurid fabulations of spying for France, Poland, and Japan; of poisoning horses in Ukraine; of Trotskyite "wrecking." Throughout the thirties, for arrests as for pig-iron production, they had quotas they were proud to exceed. Montefiore is best at sitting us down inside this head cold of a delusional system. It would be convenient to blame so many millions of senseless deaths on the morbid suspicions, seething resentments, and provincial inferiority complex of a single monster—five foot six with pigeon toes, bad teeth, a deformed arm, and feline Oriental eyes that "flashed a lupine yellow in anger"—who doodled wolf heads on a scratch pad when he wasn't micromanaging *Pravda*'s headlines. But he had the insane help of his own "Ratpack."

For the first 150 pages or so, Montefiore tries too hard to prime his pump with overwriting: "Beneath the eerie calm of these unfathomable waters were deadly whirlpools of ambition, anger and unhappiness"; "The murkiness now thickens into a deliberately blind fog." But he calms down as the news worsens. And, like a character in Dostoevsky, his dog's tongue hangs out in a shameless hurry to tell us about Beria and the Moscow Dynamo football club, Khrushchev's nervous breakdown, a rubber dildo, and a farting contest. What we have here is a social history of hell.

*Army and Our Country Are Strengthened by the Spirit of Stalin*, by Viktor Deni and lai Dolgorukov, 1939 from *Dream Factory Communism* © Harje Cantz, 2003. ograph of the Kremlin, 1947 by Robert Capa © 1947 Cornell Capa/MAGNUM



American intellectuals have it easier. The biggest threat to their well being is not a firing squad but a photo op. How sweet it is to pick up Craig Seligman's lucid and affectionate [illegible] (Counterpoint, $25) already knowing that neither of these single mothers sold or leveraged her skepter-ism, her creative property rights, or her double helix for a cable TV camera, a corporate canary cage, an open-plan office space, or a first-class seat on a jumbo jet to all those warm weather symposia on the professional thinker's all-expenses circuit. I wish I could say this is because secular Jewish Susan and secular Jewish Pauline both went to college at secular Bolshevik Berkeley, but that would be magical realism. Sontag put in barely more than a semester at Cal before checking out for Chicago. Kael started to be paid for her criticism only after she left the West Coast for the East.

Seligman, who has been an editor or contributor at half a dozen respectable magazines, is merely a reader of Sontag, albeit a medieval one, illuminating every word. Whereas Kael's longtime friend from his fact-checking days at *The New Yorker*, "I love to read Sontag," he says. "I love Kael." He prefers Kael's "humor and her intensity," her "combination of intimate, emotional insight, her good vulgar trashing and her 'feel of the American vernacular'" to Sontag's "loftiness," "detachment," "lunar beauty," prose that is "at once lovely, at times lofty, at times tactless, and at times ridiculous as well." He seems to think that while Kael was down in the mud in the nitty gritty, Sontag has spent too much time in *Against Interpretation* mooning about among the masterpieces. And being a gay man, he wants Sontag to have outed herself, too.

But he's better than that bottom line, and he isn't really choosing sides. He's talking out loud about what he admires—"the generosity, the intensity, the passion"—in two different kinds of criticism. Like Alfred Kazin and Isaiah Berlin, Seligman is a terrific quoter, getting subtleties as well as jokes. His lively sketches of both careers also say smart things about middle- and high-brow journalism in mid-century America. Never mind the fun he makes of Sontag's fiction, someday I'll subscribe to him a play by Pauline Kael. Once upon a time produced for radio. (Everything happened on a Sausalito houseboat, and all of it was yak.) Finally, we are led to understand why these two women cared for the books and movies they did, and why Seligman cares for these two women.

I am on record about Sontag at half a dozen essays elsewhere; I might have been a serious reader before I met her, but she's still telling me what's worth reading. She has the aptitude. Moreover, she went to Sarajevo while the rest of us were watching the Weather Channel. About Kael, it is personal. She taught all of us in Berkeley in the sixties how to look at what we loved on the screen. If later on she was ridiculous about *Last Tango in Paris*, she was right on about *Nashville*. When I retired from *The New Yorker*, after so many years, I couldn't imagine going to the movies without her. Now I'm glad she doesn't know that there aren't any movies that anyone needs to see.

# MITATION OF ART

## hn Currin's sleight of hand

*y Lance Esplund*

ussed in this essay:

*n Currin*. Essays by Robert Rosenblum and Staci Boris. Interview by Rochelle Steiner. Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and Serpentine Gallery, London, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 2003. 124 pages. $35.

Every few years another new painter is heralded as a modern master on the level of Rembrandt or Velázquez, and he is passed the crown for "ving painting"—not only for ng painting but also for making it relevant again and up-to-e. Recent royalty has included contemporary artists Eric hl, David Salle, Gerhard hter, and Jenny Saville. John rrin, who, at forty-one, was ed with a mid-career retrospective at the Whitney Museum last winter, is the reigning g *du jour*.

The press release for the itney's exhibition designates rrin "one of the most important and provocative artists of generation," and he is consistently compared in the catalogue and the press to French, ian, and Flemish masters. Reviewing the retrospective for *The w Yorker*, Peter Schjeldahl clares that Currin "has rehabilitated fallen practices of visual storytelling, restoring to nting its ancient functions of ustration and rhetorical persion." Arthur Danto, in *The ution*, commends him for olving "from the role of Bad y of the art world into what y few contemporary painters ve the gift, let alone the taste, to ire to—a master of high Mannerist aesthetics." Even before Currin's show could be seen in New York, *The New York Times Magazine* ran a profile of the artist, by Deborah Solomon, in which Currin's technical skill and virtuosity are given as proof that he "revives the grand manner of the past." And Mia Fineman, writing in *Slate*, affirms the consensus by assuring us that "everyone is unanimous about one thing: John Currin can paint."



*Pink Tree* © John Currin. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York City

Currin is a figurative artist who paints illustrative and distorted nudes, portraits, and contemporary genre scenes that are puzzled together from photographs, comic books, old-master reproductions, porn, and fashion magazines, and his surfaces can vary within a single canvas from slick to encrusted to leather-dry. Currin's handling of flesh—which is rendered as smooth and artificial as a mannequin's or as flimsy and thin as cellophane or as caked-on rough as a stucco wall—has been lauded as that of a master equal to Cranach, Balthus, and Courbet. And if you were to look at *John Currin*, the catalogue for his Whitney retrospective, in which Cranach's *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (c. 1530) is reproduced together with Currin's pastiches of Cranach, the superficial similarities between the two would seem obvious. But it is only on the level of the superficial that any similarities between the old masters and Currin can be made.

The breathless claims made by critics and art historians on Currin's behalf betray a rather cursory way of looking at painting, one that mistakes technical flourishes for craftsmanship, any whiff of the old masters for the old masters themselves. Before his retrospective, I had seen very few of Currin's paintings in the flesh. One of the benefits of photographic reproduction for an artist, especially for a mediocre one, is that it fuses paintings that do not cohere and provides uniformity where uniformity is lacking. Problems great and small can disappear: color notes that jar and screech, brushstrokes too thick or thin, surfaces too oily or dry, all get lost in translation. And the leveling off imposed by photography also can rob great paintings of those very same subtleties—subtleties that set masterpieces apart.

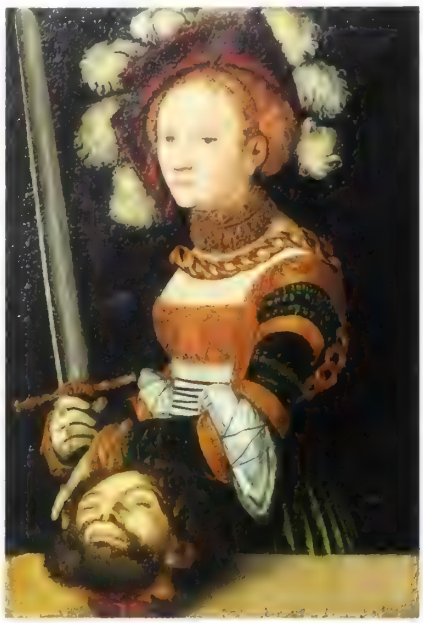
In Cranach's *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, Judith is surrounded by a field of black. Standing behind a narrow strip of table, she holds the upraised sword in her right hand and

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d on
like smoke, then liquid, then
moves behind, in front of, and
through the forms. And those forms, in turn, move and interact at varying speeds within the malleable blackness. Black is not merely a backdrop for Cranach; it is an organic rhythmic force in the painting. Black on Judith's left presses against and wraps around her, rotating her body to her right. Black penetrates her abdomen, arms, and the table. Blackness opens her up like a tunnel, as if she had given birth to Holofernes's head. At times, Cranach's black feels deep, cool, and airy, as if we were looking down into a well. At other times, black—glossy as lacquerware or soft as velvet—comforts, swallows, and envelops. And at other times still, black, with the swiftness of a sword, snaps back flat to the plane. Judith's sword not only cuts through and opens the blackness; it is a stand-in for Holofernes's body and a supporting pillar to the space. And Holofernes's head—held taut within the rectangle of the canvas by Judith's hand, the sword, the table, and that pliant darkness—appears ready to be catapulted toward us and is the bridge, or entrance, to the painting. For Cranach, black is both stage and womb, in which his characters and dramas develop. But in Currin's pastiches of Cranach—standing, lifeless nudes on fields of black—black is an inert and aimless void. Black is merely black.

In most of his paintings, Currin isolates his figures against flat fields of color. Whether he uses yellow or pink or black or blue to serve as a backdrop, the color field suffocates the very bodies it surrounds, rendering space nonexistent. Currin piles details upon details: he tells us that one form is in front of another, that there are so many wrinkles in a cloth, clouds in a sky, or blades of grass on a hill, that a gay couple is happy, that a man is aroused, that a woman is smiling. But faces always feel masklike and convey no emotion. Curves suggest movement, but no movement is felt. Forms in Currin's paintings, one overlapping the other, may imply deep space, but the forms in the distance collapse against those in the foreground, collapsing the space along with them.

Space—like time—is like a pliable, woven field in which all forms—a figure in the foreground, a distant tree on the horizon, the space in between the figure and the tree—must be equal-



ly considered and fully realized by the painter. Certainly, painting is as much about inventing impossibilities and contradictions (as when, for example, two entwined lovers, their limbs and bodies seemingly dissolved or melded together, create a third figure, a strange amalgamation of the two) as it is about conveying clearly the autonomy and separateness of the figures and the spaces between them, but an artist must be in control. He must be able to orchestrate space. Things cannot be allowed to fall where they may.

Currin would like us to believe that he is in control. His calculated choices—the artists he appropriates, the distortions in his figures, how he stands in a photo-op—have been noted by Robert Rosenblum, in his essay for *John Currin*, and by critics, in reviews, as if these choices proved Currin's aesthetic taste and intellectual prowess. Rosenblum marvels that in the "distorting mirror" of Currin's paintings, "a new race is being born before our eyes." And, in a way, distortion is the only element that is vaguely interesting in his work. Currin is well known for his paintings of young women and silver-haired matrons with basketball-size breasts: *The Magnificent Bosom*, *Ice* and *Manic*, *The Bra Shop*, *The Farm*, *Lady*, and *The Wizard*. We can see t the breasts on the figures are hug They spread to the edges of the can Each breast is caressed with the bru Around and around it goes. The bre have shadows, modeling, and hig lights. ("My God!" I heard a viewer the Whitney exclaim. "They're big than her head!") And yet Curri paintings prove that size isn't eve thing: at the very moment when v ume is most at stake, the breasts defl Shadows dent and puncture the s faces of Currin's figures, whose bre flatten out when they should be at th fullest. His bodies have volume o near their contours. He cannot carry across a form. Distortion and exagg ation are merely gimmicks that do feel like honest expressions of his ha

In fact, little in Currin feels hon There is an awkward contrivance his paintings. Every move is with rhythm and is fraught with artifice if the painting were a series of cal lations, made at a distance. And cause distortion is sensational rat than essential, the paintings f forced. When exaggeration and tortion are the rule, we come to exp them and they surprise us not at

What can happen when vi ers look at a painting is t can stop too soon. They cease to listen to the painter once t have recognized the fruit on the ta and the highlight on the fruit or Ch on the Cross and the sadness of Virgin. They can stop at the m naming of the forms and sentime and deny themselves the rich, laye experience of moving from form form within the painting. This is w leads viewers, when faced with abst art, to demand, "But what is it abo When viewers pay more attentio what they already know about f or Christ on the Cross, than to w the artist is communicating thro his exploration of a theme (the th of fertility and abundance, for exam or of sacrifice and redemption), t are treating paintings like simpl lustrations or pieces of prose ra than poetry. Paintings are more t a sum of the recognizable images w in them. Paintings, like poems, sp

*Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, by Lucas Cranach the Elder. © The Metropolitan Mu
of Art, Rogers Fund, 1911 (11.15). Photograph © 1990 The Metropolitan Museum

igh metaphor. This is the lan-
e of art.

critics' assessments of Currin's
, so much emphasis is given to
eanings of Currin's choices that
radition of painting is reduced to
of signs devoid of personal ex-
ion. When Michael Kimmelman,
art critic for the *New York Times*,
es Currin for going "through a
ialike patch of doing intention-
errible paintings, [including] the
loupe-breasted pin-ups [that] toy
tatiously with different modes of
ng pigment to canvas, particu-
with the bad-is-good approach,"
implying that the "style" of a
ter (the "look" of a Picabia or that
Vargas girl, or even that of a Dür-
a Van Eyck) can be appropriat-
ried on like a hat. Everything
is unique to an artist is reduced
set of mannerisms, gestures, and
to be impersonated, and the ex-
ence of a painting is reduced to
ecognition of its influences.

his approach to
in, and to art, is
a symptom of a dis-
tion that has been
vated for years, be-
ing at least as far
k as 1863, when
net, with his paint-
*Olympia* and *Lun-*
*on on the Grass*,
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nting and viewer,
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ak with the past.

Within the first few decades of the twentieth century, abstract artists had done away with the figure in painting and sculpture, and by the forties and fifties the Abstract Expressionists had replaced the easel painting with the heroic, mural scale. In the sixties, Warhol produced work that merely reflected commerce and popular culture; in the seventies, Photo Realism substituted the truth of a painting with the truth of a photograph. And long before the changes wrought by the Abstract Expressionists and Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, with his "Readymades" (the objects such as the urinal, the bicycle wheel, and the snow shovel he brought almost directly from store shelves to gallery pedestals), had done away with the very notion of "Art," nullifying core notions of beauty, personal taste, uniqueness, and art with a capital *A*.

In an industrial age, Duchamp's challenge was, to be sure, a provocative one: printing, photography, film, and the assembly line, as well as the ubiquitous experience of art through photo-reproduction, suggested the question of whether the handmade object would survive at all. But Duchamp had also replaced the experience of the art object with the mere concept, the idea. And it was the influence of the conceptual art of Duchamp, the artistic path of least resistance, that eventually stuck. Following in the tradition of Duchamp was easy to understand, easy to teach, and easy to do, and it had the added advantage of novelty. Art became more about politics than aesthetics, and Duchamp's ironic posturing offered an avant-garde stance that still holds to this day. Wedded to painting, however, Duchamp's cynicism does not make for a very good bedfellow. Prop a shovel in the corner of a gallery and call it art. Fine. But this kind of clever subversion becomes more difficult when dealing with a tradition like painting.

By the time I was an art student in the 1980s, painting, especially figurative painting, was being shunned as the art world increasingly embraced photography, video, performance art, and installation. Many people believed that painting from life was merely mimetic and an activity better suited to the antiquated concerns of days gone by. Contemporary issues called for nothing less than contemporary media. There was a sense that if you were painting seriously, let alone painting still lifes or nudes, then you had some explaining to do. Your choice of medium, by extension, reflected your world outlook. I remember very well a class critique, in 1983, during which a sculpture professor (who advocated working with lasers) shook his head as he asked



*Lobster* © John Currin. Courtesy Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York City

me, "Why, in the Ice Age, [illegible] still smearing oils on canvas?"

Critics were often surprised [illegible] an artist chose paint instead of [illegible] "relevant" medium. If an artist chose to paint, it probably meant [illegible] making a statement about [illegible] and what [illegible] or the elitism of "high art" or the idea of "illusion" [illegible] nude, the [illegible] "male gaze" [illegible] for and interpret the signs. Currin, who chose to paint for the cynical reason that it was subversive, was not the exception. When asked in the catalogue interview whether his art "started out as reactionary," Currin answers in the affirmative: "I was playing into the context of the early 90s, when it was very easy to exploit people's inhibitions about painting."

Many critics and art historians by then had removed themselves from the role of being arbiters of taste. After the widespread influence of Duchamp, taste, seen as the last bastion of the old guard, had become politically loaded; and aesthetics itself became suspect. Nor did these art professionals seem to understand the tradition of painting, which they were treating as the visual equivalent of text instead of poetry. Art criticism became the interpretation not of paintings but of ideas. And after a few decades of artworks such as Piero Manzoni's canned *Artist's Shit*, Vito Acconci's masturbation performances, Jeff Koons's gargantuan topiary, Tracy Emin's tampons, and Chris Ofili's elephant dung, it is perhaps understandable that critics and curators, tired of the same old thing, occasionally hunger for some traditional beauty and painting in the museum. Or at least some semblance of it. Enter John Currin.

I suspect that one of the main reasons critics see Currin as more than the weak painter he is, is because he entertains them as he covers all the bases. Currin is not a stuffy, old, dyed-in-the-wool figurative painter who pooh-poohs anything done since the nineteenth century. On the contrary, Currin's paintings, with their clever clues to and appropriations of European art and American popular culture, provide critics and art historians with titillating Pop exercises. Currin [illegible] with conceptual appetite. He will test your abilities to [illegible] side references to Hans Baldung Grien and Botticelli. His paintings are both old and new, traditional as they mock tradition. Painting that, for insider art aficionados willing to pay attention, acknowledges both the uptown scholar and the downtown hipster in each of them. Schjeldahl puts it this way: "Currin hooks us by rewarding capacities for knowledge and experience which most major art of the last half-century repressed. . . . It is pleasant to know things. It is a delight to find one's knowledge anticipated and engaged."

In an art world obsessed with newness, sex, celebrity, and politics, Currin goes into the musty old storehouse of the museum and never dirties his hands with the past. Robert Rosenblum reminds us that Currin is an artist who goes to the museum and looks at El Greco, Velázquez, Carracci, Corot, and Ingres. But Currin does not linger. He has said in a 2003 interview that he prefers to look at a painting "for twenty or thirty seconds and then move on," adding, "when I go to the Metropolitan, I don't stand and gaze at a painting for fifteen or twenty minutes. I have tried it, but it's excruciating." In my own experience, it is only after fifteen or twenty minutes with a Velázquez or an El Greco, as with anything complex and layered, that the painting truly begins to reveal itself. Currin's impatience as a viewer tells us a lot about what he expects, puts into, and gleans from a work of art.

Currin treats the museum like a shopping mall. He gives only a cursory glance to the artists he references and appropriates. He goes into the Metropolitan Museum of Art and takes a little bit of Manet's looseness, a little bit of thickness from Van Gogh, and a distended belly from the sixteenth century, but he leaves formal invention, structure, rhythm, and metaphor at the door. And critics and art historians are right there cheering him on: rough patches applied with a palette knife (Courbet applied paint with a palette knife) are said to be equal to the hand of Courbet, elongated torsos and necks (Parmigianino's figures are elongated) are said to be equal to the bodies [illegible] Parmigianino. A reclining figure [illegible] out in the foreshortened position [illegible] Mantegna's *Dead Christ* is said to [illegible] equal to that of Mantegna. Cotton-candy flourishes of paint are supposed to suggest that Currin is sensitive [illegible] beauty and attentive with his touch [illegible] qualities evocative of Tiepolo. A [illegible] grotesque paint-encrusted faces let [illegible] know that he is unafraid of realism, [illegible] liness, and expressionism. This road [illegible] taken absurdly further so as to decl[illegible] that the ugly application of paint tra[illegible] lates directly into ugliness as its subj[illegible] Rosenblum believes that Currin, [illegible] young Frankenstein who [makes] [illegible] monsters not only from the old mas[illegible] but from the humanoid fantasies [illegible] contemporary America," is, throu[illegible] his fake and grotesque amalgamati[illegible] exploring the range of ways in wh[illegible] contemporary Americans transfo[illegible] themselves "from the natural to [illegible] synthetic" or how they "enjoy su[illegible] gate experiences (a range that would[illegible] clude nose jobs, face lifts, breast [illegible] plants, computer alteration, electro[illegible] communication, video games, and [illegible] tual sex)." This "mirroring" of the w[illegible] has its roots in Duchamp and the n[illegible] sensical art of Dada, a group that, [illegible] gusted by the events of a world at [illegible] created a nonsensical art that was a[illegible] eral reflection of a nonsensical wo[illegible] For critics who crave a little bea[illegible] and tradition—but not so much th[illegible] breaks with Duchamp and th[illegible] beloved irony—Currin does an extr[illegible] makeover of the old masters, provi[illegible] the dead-white-male-weary art w[illegible] with paintings that, as they dress d[illegible] the Renaissance and dumb down [illegible] keep perfect pace with our sex-obse[illegible] MTV-watching times.

Artists have always taken f[illegible] other artists. Painters wan[illegible] become painters precisely [illegible] cause they fall in love with the w[illegible] of Fra Angelico, El Greco, Mondr[illegible] or Cézanne. And the tradition of "c[illegible] ing," or drawing from, other artis[illegible] making the same moves they m[illegible] discovering the same spatial relat[illegible] ships and rhythms they discove[illegible] moving through and uncovering [illegible] same forms and structures [illegible] metaphors—is the surest way [illegible] painters to learn their craft. "Copy

s artists to gain a level of insight—
nly about singular works of art
a specific artist's hand but also
the activity of composing—that
ossible by any other means. That
y Michelangelo drew from Masac-
Renoir drew from Michelangelo,
se drew from Renoir. But to draw
other artists does not mean mere-
imitate. To "draw" implies every-
the word stands for: to pull or to
or to draw forth, as from the earth,
a, or a well. When a teacher tells
dent that he should first learn how
raw before he becomes a video
, much more is implied than learn-
ow to compose form and space
n a rectangle.

hen a figurative artist such as
us goes into the museum to draw
the past, he certainly is aware of
resent. He embraces the tradi-
of painting so that he can make it
uely his own. And in doing so, he
s new blood into the vein, fresh
r into the well; for other painters,
ecomes seed, fruit, root, and soil.
t Balthus and Matisse and Ver-
know is exactly what a painter
into the museum to find out.
ert Rosenblum is quick to inform
at Currin "knows his old masters
e out," and I am sure that Profes-
Rosenblum knows his old masters,
But their particular kind of know-
which focuses on the surface of a
ting over its substance, isn't real-
nowing" at all.

althus looks at Piero, Courbet,
accio, and Titian, and he fuses
ities of each of them into himself.
the artists never seem like they've
imitated; they are always born
v. Looking at Balthus's paintings,
realizes that his influences—from
ent fresco to Courbet's fruit to
in Titian—reveal themselves or-
cally, like qualities of the parents
an sense within the movements
expressions of the child. An artist's
of art becomes him, and it is in
way that painting, from painter
ainter, from painting to painting,
ves as a living tradition.

When Balthus paints the dreamy,
, and woodsy *Reclining Nude*
33–86), a picture of an adolescent
between sleep and waking, on a
, he varies the feeling of her flesh
esemble marble, fruit, earth, and
fire. In places, she looks like fallen sculpture; in other places, like moonlight on water; and in other places still, like petrified stone or damaged fresco. There is something beautifully vulnerable, innocent, and wounded about her, as if she has given over or has given up. Her cheeks, full, round, and aglow, are ripe and sanguine. Yet the heaviness of her seemingly buried body is defied by its impossibly weightless drift. It is as if she hovers between birth and gestation, between being grounded and floating, and she corkscrews upward like a twisting root or like an animal roused by its prey, activating the blackness with the stir and burn of her body. In this painting, as in others, Balthus treats adolescence as a metaphor, as a theme. For Balthus, the universal idea of passing between worlds, of being neither here nor there, applies as much to the passage of man, from child to adult, as it does to the passage of culture and art, from ancient to modern.

Balthus, who died in 2001, said in a 1994 interview that he never wanted to be an "artist," adding, "I have a horror of the word. . . . What I believe is that the people who paint today are not the same people who painted let's say 200 years ago, or 300 years ago. . . . They're all artists today. What I find terrible is that need of expressing oneself. Why express oneself, why not express the universe?"

Painters do, however, still exist—those who have kept the tradition of painting alive through the reinvention of forms and universal themes. Among them are Ellsworth Kelly, R. B. Kitaj, and Leon Kossoff; as well as the lesser-known contemporary abstract painters Pat Adams, Salvatore Federico, Bill Jensen, Deborah Rosenthal, Joan Snyder, Trevor Winkfield; and the representational painters Gabriel Laderman, Stanley Lewis, and the late Louisa Matthiasdottir. The mission of these artists is to paint, not to titillate and entertain; to engage with the poetic, universal language of painting instead of the fashionable chatter of a fickle art world. And, as such, their works, along with the tradition of painting, will endure. ■



# THE INFINITE'S JEST

## Stanley Elkin imagines the life after life

*By William H. Gass*

Discussed:

*The Living End*, by Stanley Elkin. Dalkey Archive Press, 2004. 133 pages. $11.95.



Many of the beliefs mankind enjoys—and we certainly do enjoy most of them—are held like a pan above the fire, close enough to warm them but not so near that any will singe, sear, char, or fry. We are inclined to back off from our beliefs when they begin to turn ugly or unmanageable. Like that face in the morning mirror, it's there but we no longer look at it. For instance, a lot of us like to believe that we are immortal, that the death that is essential to this life will be overcome and defeated. We may in addition be convinced that our life after life could be unpleasant as well as pleasant, disagreeable in the extreme if we aren't baptized or badly misbehave; and that Dante has pictured it rather well, this pit in inner earth where sinners shall burn for ages like coal-mine fires sometimes do—with implacable anger against their fuel. Of course, we cannot imagine the pleasures of Heaven or the pains of Hell in other than human, body-borne terms. So we say "it will be *like* this" but "it will not really *be* this," because the fires of hell do not consume, even singe, sear, char, or fry—not really—since a few poor souls must fry forever, seared and seared again, requiring some tatter of spirit to return to be singed afresh, some cut of body and sliver of sense to survive and relay the pain to that corner of consciousness set aside for the torment intended.

The damned are forbidden to forget, sleep, or faint.

Dante often imagined metaph
made mundane and hammered fla
the inferno's forges so that those w
in effect, ate their children little by
tle while they lived would be forced
fact, to eat them bite by bite the
the starving Ugolino, like a consti
tion clogging the bottom of the
verse, is compelled to gnaw the skul
his own betrayer—an archbishop
less—and wipe his blood-smea
mouth with the prelate's hair, bec
he was suspected, while nailed with
kids in a castle tower for his sev
treacheries, of becoming a cannib
his children. There is always this pr
lem with literalizing a figure of spe
all its aspects should be dealt w
equally; but we never . . . we neve
that . . . because, as in the case before
if our flesh is not really fuel, if it bu
but does not burn up (and just imag
the amount of oxygen with which
must be constantly supplied), the
isn't fuel, isn't burned, and cannot c
sequently cause the pain we might h
experienced when nipped at the st
by a pan lid, for instance, an afflict
that could be cooled and soothed
a smart that was mean but moment
So this pain we are promised is a fict
the fires are fictions too, since our
is not like gas to be charged for by
BTU but is returned to its body t
burned again as though an eyeb
muscle, lymph node, or rib had b
rented. Yet even a rental—tux or ca
folding chair—will wear out. In
everyone is in poor health, yet no
may die. Our corpses may lie in ru
but our ruins dare not rot . . . well . . .
utterly. Eternity won't let them.

To live on endlessly . . . all of u
How often do we seriously cont
plate what that might me
Boswell hoped that Hume wo
keep his atheism on short le
when death knocked, and he w
to the philosopher's bedside w
illness was apparently winning
war with him to hear what H
thought about his future at suc
crucial hour. Indeed, Boswell h
to be comforted by Hume's expe
backslide of mind, but when as
whether "it was not possible
there might be a future state," H
replied that "it was possible th
piece of coal put upon the fire w
not burn," and added that immo

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Dante's Inferno, Canto 33 © Corridon Art Resource, New York

s "a most unreasonable fancy." ell tells us that this answer him feel "like a man in sudden r eagerly seeking his defensive ' The arms he found were his er's and Dr. Johnson's.

*The Living End,* Stanley Elkin's ty calls upon all the dead who mehow missing, and not propnterred, to congregate on the lay, but who knows in what ition? Wet as we first were we fell into the sea? or cold as been in glacial ice? or in the scattered bits to which a car blew us? If and when the earth s back its covers, coffins pop lids, and we are resurrected, t be in our prime? as we died, he cancer that gnawed us near- half still greedy? or with the on we were sporting when our failed? We do not inquire. Or er death, we are only souls, as terial as time is said to be, what istinguish mine from yours? my ories? at five, when I had little all? at eighty-five, when I no r knew my name? We do not re. If souls are all the same, as believe, then It, not I, is im- al. For It I do not care a fig. I to know what screams while it s in Hell or strums the strings in en, tirelessly—and for whose whose agony and whose inat- on?—forever and ever.

rpetuities, eternities, infinities, ortalities: troublesome concepts, realities.

hat if . . . Stanley Elkin won- l on his way to and from the oom in the middle of the night. at if all this stuff about Heaven Hell were true? Literally." It was ddle-of-the-night idea, flown in dream, so was it as wonderful as ought? and would he even re- ber it in the morning? He woke ife, Joan, to verify its value and, ne forget, to bear it for him in orrow's mind. He needn't have led her, for the next morning vords that went with the idea lit pigeons on the page, and the story, "Conventional Wisdom," dy conceived to be the left pan- three, began its confident un- ng. The ultimate result, a fan e of three sections called *The Living End,* is now twenty-six years old, which makes it middle-aged by fiction's count, because novels not only age more rapidly than dogs but their first years are measured in review days and remainder weeks. It is the final volume of the Dalkey Archive Press's reissue of Stanley Elkin's fiction. *George Mills,* Elkin's most ambitious work, keeps it company, as it did in the beginning, since *The Living End* popped up in the midst of *George Mills* like a volunteer in a formal flower bed. Even its composition, brisk as it was, took two years, because it was written during lulls in the long novel's more tortuous course.

Conventional wisdoms are like dodge-em cars—ineptly steered and always colliding. Good deeds will not go unrewarded, in the next life if not in this one, but we had better read the deed's fine print, for it is also true that no good deed goes unpunished. Our most immediate notions of what might be a fit punishment for a particular crime are not to be trusted, nor that authority granted to W. S. Gilbert's divine Mikado, an expert, like Dante, in these matters.

Hell—defined as the most unpleasant place its inventors can imagine—is consequently the best depository for human bile and vindictiveness. It is also the goblin that is going to get us if we don't do as we are told. It exists, but only in the chambers of the human heart. When it comes to envisioning Hell, details are never lacking. Heaven, on the other hand, is always vaguely rendered. Nearly everything is white, like a Richard Meier museum. In Elkin's account, of course, it must contain celestial choirs, gates of pearl, and streets of gold. Aside from the chance to walk over hills as woolly as sheep, we shall see few fields of wheat or barns of hay or arbors heavy with grape—no signs of work—perhaps some shining cities, sugar-plum fairies, or big rock-candy mountains. I think that is because, if we were to give it its due as the pleasantest place its inventors can imagine, we would be embarrassed by the common quality of our wants—women, sweets, silks, wine, luxurious surroundings—so we make no mention of being able to gorge ourselves without ever being sated, of being perpetually in heat so we can be repeatedly pacified, hitting the opium pipe to benefit from dreams better than sleep, or enjoying the opportunity to peek below the balcony while various injuries are inflicted upon our enemies—to watch without weariness, remorse, or fear of reprisal.

When political and religious leaders try to con other people's children into going to war or committing suicide for them, the suckers' rewards are often described in just such embarrassingly hedonistic terms and often include the offer of camera coverage. If God were on our side, He would warn us to be wary of causes that ask us to die for them. If we have not read *The Living End* we might complain that God should do Himself what He wants done instead of handing out assignments. He is the progenitor of the illocutionary act. After "let there be light," "let there be peace" should be easy, "shut up" a snap.

Because the first panel is given over to our common saws, Elkin reins in his language, renders his narrative's actions with the broad strokes of low comedy, and forms his dialogue from a continuous stream of clichés. Irony is thicker than Christmas pudding. The tradition mandates this approach. My Bible dictionary is quick to affirm it for Job, one of the precursors to Ellerbee, Elkin's protagonist in the first panel of *The Living End:*

> Two prominent features appearing throughout the book [of Job] may offer keys for one's hearing of the divine speeches. These features are the use of irony and of questions. Ironic speech abounds, in which the obvious sense is subverted and another implicit sense emerges through them. Often the device serves to mask and reveal dissenting views in the garb of conventional wisdom, which is thereby left intact for the imperceptive but exploded for the keen listener.

Ellerbee, who is given no other name than Mister, has been going through a bad patch in his and his family's fortunes. He will be a Job

without a job description. Elkin's rhetoric of absurd ascents, of which he is a master, makes fun of our daily recital of complaints. Nothing is so trivial it can't be worth a good hand wringing. There is (1) the loss of loose change (2) between the cushions of other people's couches; there are (3) bottles broken (4) on which a deposit was receivable; there are (5) other coins that phones or vending machines refuse to return, as well as (6) expensive tickets that Ellerbee cannot use because he must be out of town or is iced up or snowed in, and (7)—a characteristic step—there is his habit of overtipping in dark taxis: all this before we reach the first landing, a level of Hell set aside for reversals in the stock market.

For openers. Ellerbee's house is reappraised for tax purposes at a lesser value, which is a lucky break, but the house promptly burns down. His Minneapolis liquor store is robbed, and two of his clerks are shot—one killed, the other crippled and, oh yes, brain damaged to boot. A worse fate is to befall Ellerbee. He is a good and kindly man. He feels obliged to help both the sick and the dead. Against his wife's wishes.

> "Idealist," May said. "Martyr."
>
> "Leave off, will you, May? I'm responsible. I'm under an obligation."
>
> "Responsible, under an obligation!"
>
> "Indirectly. God damn it, yes. Indirectly. They worked for me, didn't they? It's a combat zone down there. I should have had security guards around the clock."

Ellerbee is done for. Hell is his destination. But there is worse to come. At his clerk's funeral, the fetching widow kisses him on the lips. His body responds with a boner. Can she be counted a neighbor's wife? Can a boner be a case of covetousness? Ellerbee is toast. Hell is where he's headed. But there is worse to come. He starts up another store. This one is in St. Paul, and it is called High Spirits.

> The business flourished—doing so well that after only his second month in the new location he no longer felt obliged to stay open on Sundays—though his promise to his clerks' families, which he kept, prevented him from making the inroads into his [illegible] that he would have [illegible]

If it took three strikes to be called out in this game, Ellerbee would be, but he needn't have stayed open on the Sabbath, or had what Elkin has elsewhere called a soft-on—taking God's name in vain was whiff enough.

Our author is on theologically sound ground here. God's laws are to be followed to the letter. Some readers will remember the fate of Uzzah, the son of Abinadab, who, while accompanying the Ark of the Covenant as it was being moved from his father's house, put out a saving hand to keep the Ark from tipping when it bounced about in its cart on a rough road and was struck dead on the instant his unsanctified fingers touched it. Nor was it Ellerbee's fleeting desire that did him in, but the boner, however fainthearted, because it was a real if covert act. Moreover, he failed to keep the Sabbath holy when he kept his store open, even if his intention was of the kindest, because intentions of any kind don't count.

The letter killeth. The complaint's been made. By some of the wiser prophets. But the Divine Commandments are modeled on Natural Law. Had Uzzah touched a live wire he would have died regardless of his character or his designs. The water that fills a drowning man's lungs does not ask for his résumé. It would be a mistake to think that regulations regarding adultery were of less concern than those involving a loss of life, for the laws, being those of God, are all equal, are frequently expressed as taboos, and can be summed up in a word: obey. In time, since there were lawyers abounding, these laws multiplied until there were so many only the scribes had any clear idea of what they were or what they meant. Anyone interested in keeping the Sabbath holy might have felt the usefulness of an itemized list. This multiplication, especially of ritual requirements, was an enormous source of power.

Perhaps literature's most brilliant representation of the strength and glory of the Law can be found in Kafka's novella *In the Penal Colony*. The commandant of the colony is espec[illegible] proud of his instrument of punish[illegible] which literally etches upon the [illegible] demned person's body the letters [illegible] spell out his crime, putting peri[illegible] both life and sentence with an [illegible] phatic spike. This officer disappr[illegible] of the new commandant, who ap[illegible] eatly supports the spirit of the [illegible] values love and forgiveness over ju[illegible] pleads insanity or good intentions[illegible] troduces degrees of importance [illegible] other niceties, as well as endless [illegible] delays, just as the prophets did, de[illegible] terializing Israel's Kingdom to C[illegible] into something within, circumc[illegible] the heart and, paradoxically, by p[illegible] ing sin past act and intention int[illegible] stinct, ensuring that we are all gui[illegible] something . . . or other . . . all the [illegible] . . . dirty-minded though clean-sha[illegible] There were little sins and big sins [illegible] given sins and deadly sins, crim[illegible] passion, conscience, and calcula[illegible] sins of omission and commission [illegible] cestral curses, private as well as pu[illegible] vices, with Love and Justice so t[illegible] ly wound around each other's th[illegible] neither could breathe nor cry.

Ellerbee will be shot and k[illegible] during another holdup—a sticku[illegible] his new St. Paul store. We are c[illegible] pelled to infer that they—the po[illegible] that be—expect Ellerbee to be [illegible] dered. They don't do the deed th[illegible] selves, however. Rather, they all [illegible] pair of klutzes to perform that [illegible] vice. One is an ace abettor na[illegible] Ladlehaus, whom Ellerbee will [illegible] in Hell when he gets there. The [illegible] er is a gunsel whom Ladlehau[illegible] blabber, calls Ron. In the meant[illegible] Ellerbee goes up to Heaven, as [illegible] do, and is overwhelmed by the r[illegible] ness of it all: shining cities [illegible] shining streets and a populac[illegible] families advertising their reunio[illegible] the afterworld with radiant faces [illegible] pernaturally, there are angels[illegible] tached to wings larger than they[illegible] God drowning in aura, halos gl[illegible] ing like lightning bugs, not a b[illegible] untrimmed or a wig askew. [illegible] evitably, there is ambrosia, ma[illegible] and music. Ellerbee decides, a[illegible] and the angel beam up, that [illegible] from afar Heaven looks like a th[illegible] park. Then, having arrived [illegible] thinks it still looks like a th[illegible] park. Strikes four and five. In

d of Law your actions put you
k; in Love City your unspoken
ons can take you down. Heaven
lways resented having been de-
d by Disney.

Ellerbee catches it from both
, as though the Old and New
ments were the closing jaws of
e. But there is trouble from yet
ner direction. In Hell, where he
been abruptly sent, he learns
the main man Himself still an-
r reason for his plight. Since
bee was an orphan, he has never
he chance to honor his father
is mother as he ought, and the
pieties he has practiced toward
doptive parents don't count.
e six.

e may be unfair but afterlife is
so. Ladlehaus, accomplice in
e, the pettiest of crooks, lives to
early a hundred and dies "an or-
, unbleached death like some-
g brought back from the Health
l Store." He does go to Hell,
gh, and even gets to see God on
of His Ubiquitous Training vis-
t is Elkin's opportunity to have
e fun with the "omnis"—the four
t properties that conventional
also theological wisdom give to
: the all-powerful, all-knowing,
ywhere-present, and perfect Be-
God admits that "Omniscience
s Me eyestrain. I'll let you in on
ething. I wear contacts." But
ers who enjoyed Philosophy 101
point out to the Almighty that
omnipresence makes eyestrain
ecessary. He is a part of every-
g that happens, so of course He
ws about it. God also complains
ut "omnipotence—that takes it
of you. I mean if you want to
k up a sweat try omnipotence for
w seconds." When God tries to
te a rock He can't lift? the quick
ent invariably wonders. Logic is
Devil's pitchfork, and when
n has God claim to have squared
circle, we know that either the
y or His draftsman is fibbing.
re are limits to omnipotence and
is one of them. Contradiction is
careless thinker's catastrophe. I
my philosopher's finger at our
nor, but Stanley has an answer
t will satisfy me when—at the
clusion, of course—he offers it.

With a song in its heart, theology marches on. The reader will doubtless remember those frequent movie scenes in cemeteries when, before a simple cross or forlorn stone, a husband kneels to piously commune with a loved one prematurely lost. If he is not vowing revenge he is seeking forgiveness for having fallen in love again, or he needs some advice, his nerve annealed, his blunted purpose pointed. Sometimes the lady's image is superimposed, sometimes we hear her voice in the hero's head, sometimes he speaks out loud as if they were in conversation, sometimes a brief breeze will move the flowers he's brought to indicate a ghostly presence. These clichés represent conventional wisdom, but in the central panel of this triptych, called "The Bottom Line," Elkin has it his own way—as always.

God has mistaken Ladlehaus for a smart-alecky back talker and flung him impulsively out of Hell to be retombed in what is now, because eminent domain has grabbed the graveyard, a high school athletic field in St. Paul—"his consciousness locked into his remains like a cry in a doll." Everywhere in Elkin's work the reader will run into electrifying lines like this one, so perfectly, so powerfully accurate and apt, so directly yet desperately phrased, that what might have seemed a bit of kidding around can only be taken as the somber chuckling of a malign fate.

> For he felt that that was where he was, somewhere inside his own remains, casketed, coffin'd, pine boxed, in his best suit, the blue wool, the white button-down, the green tie pale as lettuce.

There Ladlehaus manages to catch the attention of Quiz, the school's caretaker and groundskeeper, when that not-nice man finds that his wife has medicated his lunch by adding oatcakes. "Oatcakes" is the word that reaches Ladlehaus's grave through the cleat-scarred ground, and it by chance arrives at the end of an eloquent monologue by Ladlehaus in time to seem to be the answer to its question: "What's the bottom line, eh?"


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Quiz has heard Ladlehaus but hasn't fancied [illegible] from a lot of lawn. So he begins a series of charades designed to give the body below the belief that St. Paul is now at war with its twin city. It is a characteristic [illegible] that at critical [illegible] roughly shoved aside and [illegible] gone to [illegible] tage of the [illegible] Balkans—steps are more than taken, steps taken are not returned, the shoes worn on the feet that took the steps are put back in their boxes and shelved according to wearer weight and tread size; lengths are measured off like cloth in order to compel the customary to give up its hypocrisy—so that what has passed for real grows larger than life like a six-ton pumpkin, a modest personal quirk is decked out like a float on parade and preceded by a band just off a steamer from New Orleans. The bubble we live in is blown till it bursts. That is to say: all Hell breaks loose.

Ladlehaus is regaled. His sacred ground gets peed on. With the help of an unruly bunch of boys, Quiz puts on war games. There is a brisk session of Q and A. Then Quiz and his wife convince Ladlehaus he isn't dead but on life support. The pair threaten to pull the plug. And no one involved—Quiz, the Quiz kids, Quiz's spouse—questions the phenomenon; after all, they are familiar with the phrase "a voice from the grave." A world in which children play where the corms of death are planted makes Ladlehaus, who can feel nothing by definition, shudder despite his incapacities; he, who "had lived in Hell and seen God and who had, it was to be supposed, a mission," gets the willies; he, who "represented final things, ultimates, whose destiny it was to fetch bottom lines," feels some qualms, because, as a consequence of their frolics and charades, "appearances had not been kept up" and his grave was littered with "candy wrappers, popsicle sticks, plugs of gum."

The mock triumphant final panel, "The State of the Art," is a painting of an unhappy Holy Family. Here all pretense of following conventional views is abandoned for the sake of the tough questions, though some of [illegible] questions are conventional [illegible] asked of [illegible] as—is, indeed, they inevitably are: Was Jesus lonely as a child with no brothers or sisters to play with? Jesus [illegible] the right hand of God but on a hinky-dinky stool. Yet there are unique questions, too: What must childbirth be like for a virgin? no picnic. And a life without what we call love? no picnic either. Jesus resents having been offered up, and, in addition, mourns the loss of his worldly life. Joseph can't stand this imposture of a kid who claims to be the messiah. Jesus wears jewelry celebrating his sacrifice, but he is "a surly savior," and cherishes his limp. God seeks forgiveness of the Forgiver for the murder of Quiz, whom He smote in a fit of annoyance when that man interrupted a concert by the high-school band with his complaints about the talkative ghost who's inhabiting his grounds. Nonetheless, God does not ask to be shriven for the death of a boy whose playing He so liked He ordered him to Heaven. There are many such revelations. The conclusion of all things, however, is too satisfactory to be spoiled by some secondhand account, for this is a story with a punch line—a profoundly sound one, in my opinion.

When Stanley Elkin's heart finally failed, it killed his MS. Multiple sclerosis is a pitiless disease. It deserved to die. Gone, too, were what I imagine were his daily humiliations: trying to get out of bed, trying to shave, to dress, to face another day of pain and physical incompetence. The smooth board that, like a spatula, helped slide him from wheelchair to sofa or car seat could now suffer some idleness, as did the tram that hauled him up and down the stairs. The wheelchair itself can remain folded in a closet out of sight. MS is cowardly. It weakens you and encourages other organs to fail but, like the parasite that destroys itself when it destroys its host, is itself done in by its own nefarious doings. Stanley's lungs would occasionally collapse. He would fall ill of pneumonia. His heart had been repaired more than once. MS sneaks up on you. It leaves you for a while, only to return like [illegible] unwelcome relative. It goes about [illegible] business more slowly than a [illegible] clerk. There is no present cure, [illegible] hopelessness must invade its victi[illegible] dull every activity like a storm of d[illegible] Stanley wrote about all this—wr[illegible] wonderfully about it, that is the ir[illegible] Another irony (not lost on Stan[illegible] ironies never were): its initials f[illegible] the singular for manuscript.

He was an intimate of undeser[illegible] misfortune. It made a theologia[illegible] him. He even wrote about a rabb[illegible] *The Rabbi of Lud*—whose incon[illegible] tence is so finely honed he only se[illegible] families he does not know in a t[illegible] whose chief industry is cemetery pl[illegible] It is a town of the dead, but the wh[illegible] earth is a grave, and in *The Living* [illegible] we hear from one who is buried [illegible] neath a high-school athletic fi[illegible] What about that final book he [illegible] me he was pushing out? It was t[illegible] called . . . *Mrs. Ted Bliss*. Of cou[illegible] How ironic, even in its music: Mi[illegible] Bliss. Yet how wholly meant in all[illegible] ways it went.

Stanley loved excess. More is m[illegible] he quite correctly said. Sometime[illegible] sounded like a sideshow barker. [illegible] was the Greatest Show on Earth. H[illegible] inside the covers of his books, w[illegible] mysteries be revealed: behind this j[illegible] et flap, ladies and gentlemen, you [illegible] see wonders—the hairless bear[illegible] lady, the anorexic fat man, the sw[illegible] swallower who is made himself of sl[illegible] metal—and why shouldn't he be? [illegible] that steady diet of steel.

For him it was the nomenclatur[illegible] the world that was its wonder. F[illegible] drugstore, dance studio, cosme[illegible] counter, dry cleaner, hospital, m[illegible] jailhouse, Hell, he gathered his w[illegible] And released them at the right t[illegible] the way the magician does his birds[illegible] ness—his, kids', country's—he v[illegible] ed like a doctor, a consoling frien[illegible] doubting Thomas. When Stanley [illegible] illness, he did the illness in. The ill[illegible] was a curse, of course, but a curse [illegible] that uttered by one of Mark Twa[illegible] river pilots, a curse so elaborate it [illegible] by its end, forgotten the pain that [illegible] provoked it.

And when he did health, what h[illegible] pened? Health soon had the sni[illegible]

*Continued on pa[illegible]*

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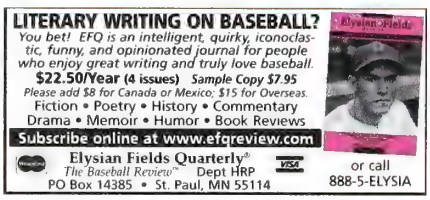
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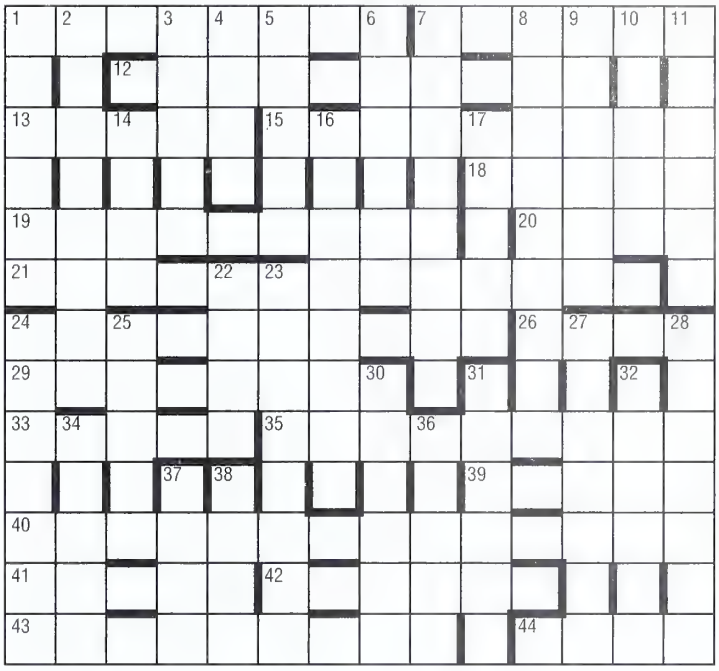

Continued from page 96

and a rough cough. In this passage fr
*The Franchiser*, his paean to "con
nience" comes down with a fever.

> Maybe all that distinguishes man fr
> the beasts is that man had the con
> eration to invent garbage can lin
> What a convenience! We die, yes,
> are compensated by a million cor
> niences. Hotties are just the beginn
> We perfect ourselves, we reach tow
> grace—I foresee a time when there
> be flowered sheets and pillowcase
> motel rooms. This is a deflection to
> venience and the magnitude of the
> man spirit, the leap to comfort.
> chemical creams . . . the chemical crea
> You know, the little sacks of pow
> you put in your coffee. I foresee
> day—someone may be working on
> right now—when non-dairy creat
> shall be mixed with saccharine in
> same packet! There you go: con
> nience! And do you think for
> minute that the man now waitin
> this great idea's time to come will l
> thought it up for mere money? No.
> thinkable. It will hit him on an a
> er like an inspiration, for the grace o
> thing, only that, for the convenien
> would make, and if he profits by his
> why the money will be only *another*
> venience. Someday a visionary
> come among us. He will lobby Con
> to legalize pot on the principle th
> would be a terrific boon to the sn
> food industry! Oh, friends, the quali
> all our lives shall rise like yeast. I
> this world, this comfortable, conve
> world, its pillow condition.

And Stanley did love this w
he loved it well, even when it
badly by him, even when he bec
bedded and pillowed in awkward
and pain. He used to pretend—
he did a good job of it—that m
was the only measure that matt
but had he wanted money, he w
have made it. He wrote—as
*Franchiser*'s Ben Flesh imagine
inventor of conveniences inver
he wrote for the grace of it . .
cause he was an unmatched
brator of the world, and
particularly of its unseemlines
vulgarity, its aches and envies, it
lifers, its absurd turns, its appar
ineradicable superstitions—still
the grace of it . . . for only that . . .

# PUZZLE



## Getting Your Bearings

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

The six unclued Across entries are each related (in the same way) to one of the six unclued Down entries.

Clued answers include seven proper names. 3D and 44A are variants. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 67.

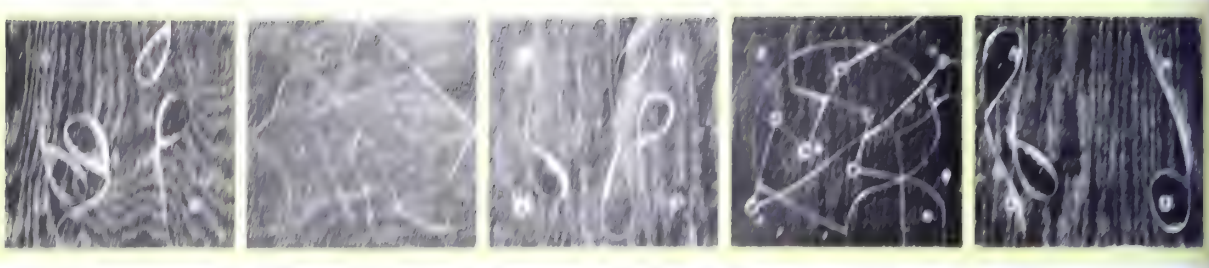
ACROSS

1. Sections covering not quite just desserts (8)
7. Having extra body, like some wine? (6)
12. *See 10 Down (10)*
13. *See 25 Down (5)*
15. Lead coils routed into fuel delivery system (4,5)
18. Charge of "Teacher's Pet!" gets almost sick (5)
19. Abandoned car is it! Go chop it up (9)
20. Catholic boy is provided with a cover-up (4)
21. Alienated? Pluto is! (13)
24. *See 23 Down (4,6)*
26. *See 1 Down (4)*
29. Unexpectedly takes a kind of turn, covering up a wrong answer (8)
33. Doctor that is starting to rinse with less water (5)
35. Circus performer makes comeback in spot free and ahead of its time (9)
39. *See 4 Down (5)*
40. Sailing around in Titanic, die of name-calling? (14)
41. Satan could be a really generous guy! (5)
42. Start speech with ending of the identical opening word! (6)
43. *See 8 Down (2,7)*
44. Leader of Muslims—This saint would be aghast (4)

DOWN

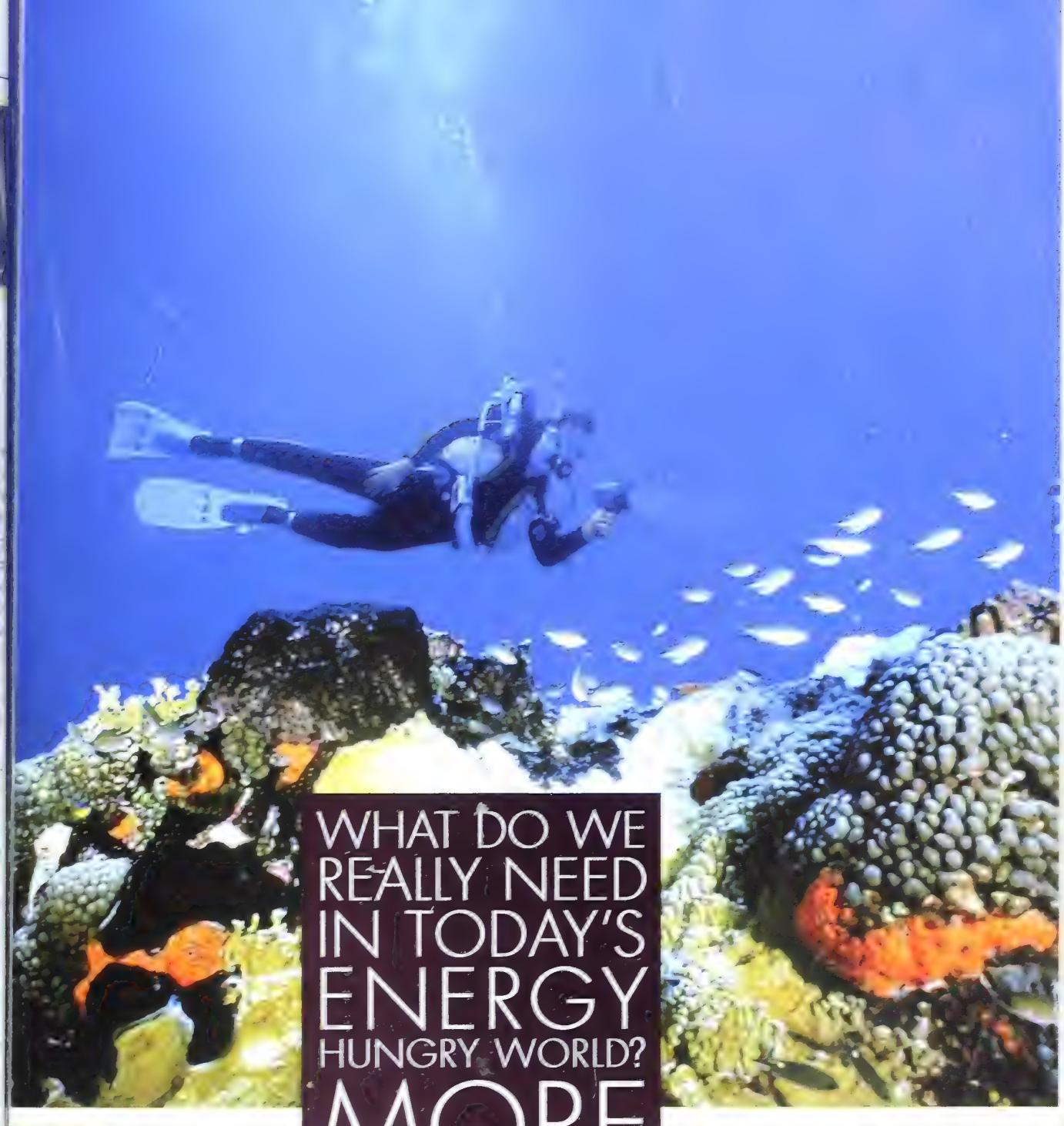
1. *See 26 Across (6)*
2. Tanks north of a sign in winter (8)
3. Enemy—it's upsetting unborn children (5)
4. *See 39 Across (4)*
5. If unfinished: Native Americans (5)
6. Ridiculous cavils about a language (6)
7. Cleans up, receiving one issuance from insurance companies (8)
8. *See 43 Across (9)*
9. Homer almost left in rubbish (6)
10. *See 12 Across (5)*
11. Proceeds, starting to yawn and slide off (6)
14. Goads someone to decapitate thieves (4)
16. To be in love, weep, and like fall (8)
17. Spanish song spread out (5)
22. European flower, cross between mimosa, arbutus (4)
23. *See 24 Across (8)*
24. I'm Judas (curious thing to believe) (7)
25. *See 13 Across (5)*
27. Digs for half hour: exhausting (7)
28. Certain celebrations could be in a be-in (7)
30. Shakespeare initially has "To be . . ." for a pig (6)
31. Pop-up inside: naked artist's model in loose clothing (6)
32. In speech, raise the subject of jewelry (6)
34. Signal from God supported by ladies with trees (5)
36. I'm up and about on Sunday—flaky stuff (5)
37. Hot about leading love interest (4)
38. Knife pointed up? That would be crazy! (4)

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Getting Your Bearings," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by May 12. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the July issue. Winners of the March puzzle, "Chutes and Ladders," are Neal Conner, Eugene, Oregon; S. Eisman, Philadelphia; and Polly Leshan, Ft. Washington, Pennsylvania.



# FINDINGS

The Congress of [illegible] has [illegible] that the [illegible] will [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]



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ect this fragile marine ecosystem from the most common
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e looking for oil and natural gas in the region we worked
ell from Jim Bay—a marine biologist and Shell employee
r some of the years now. Jim and others at Shell have been working to protect the
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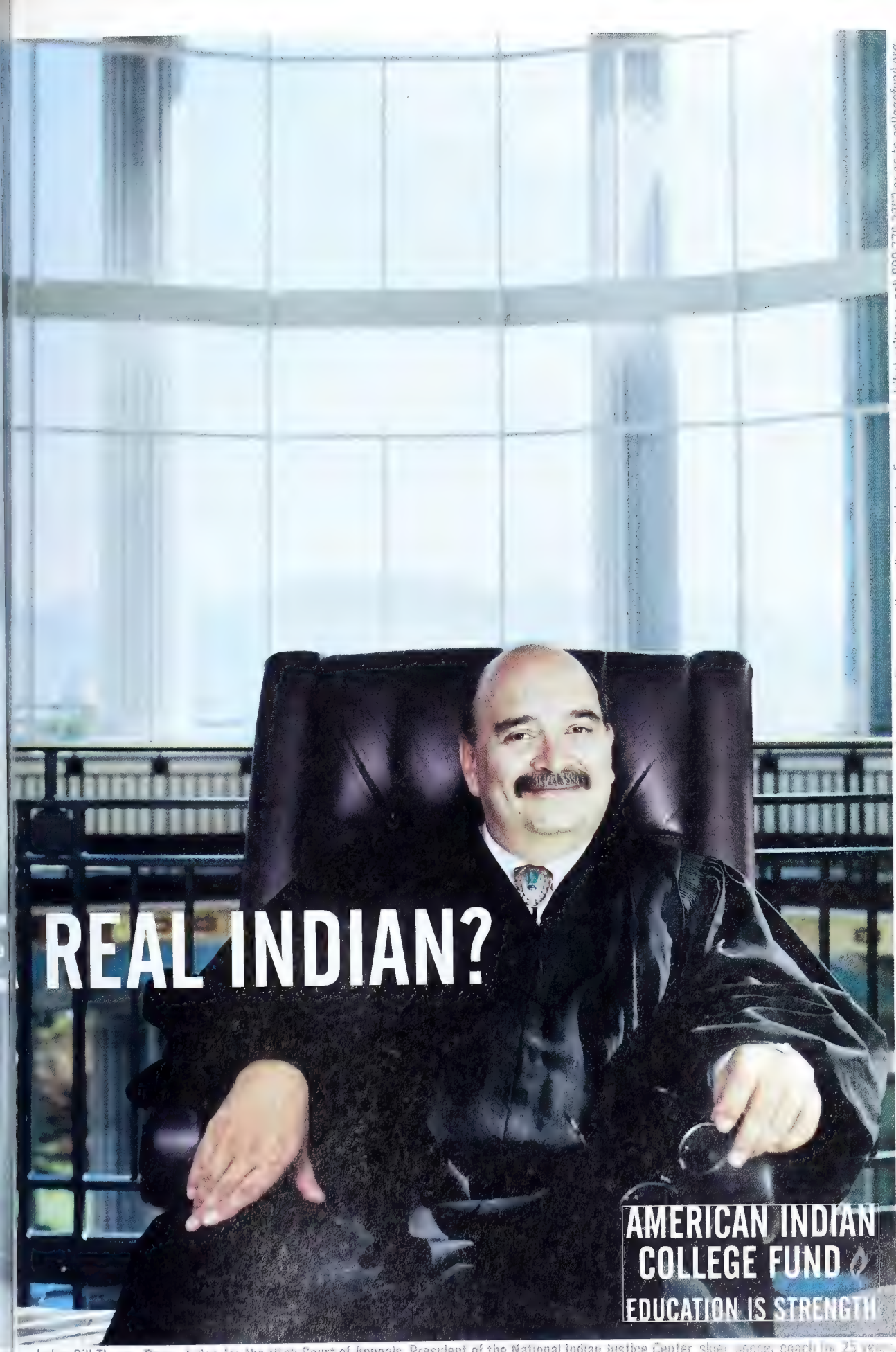
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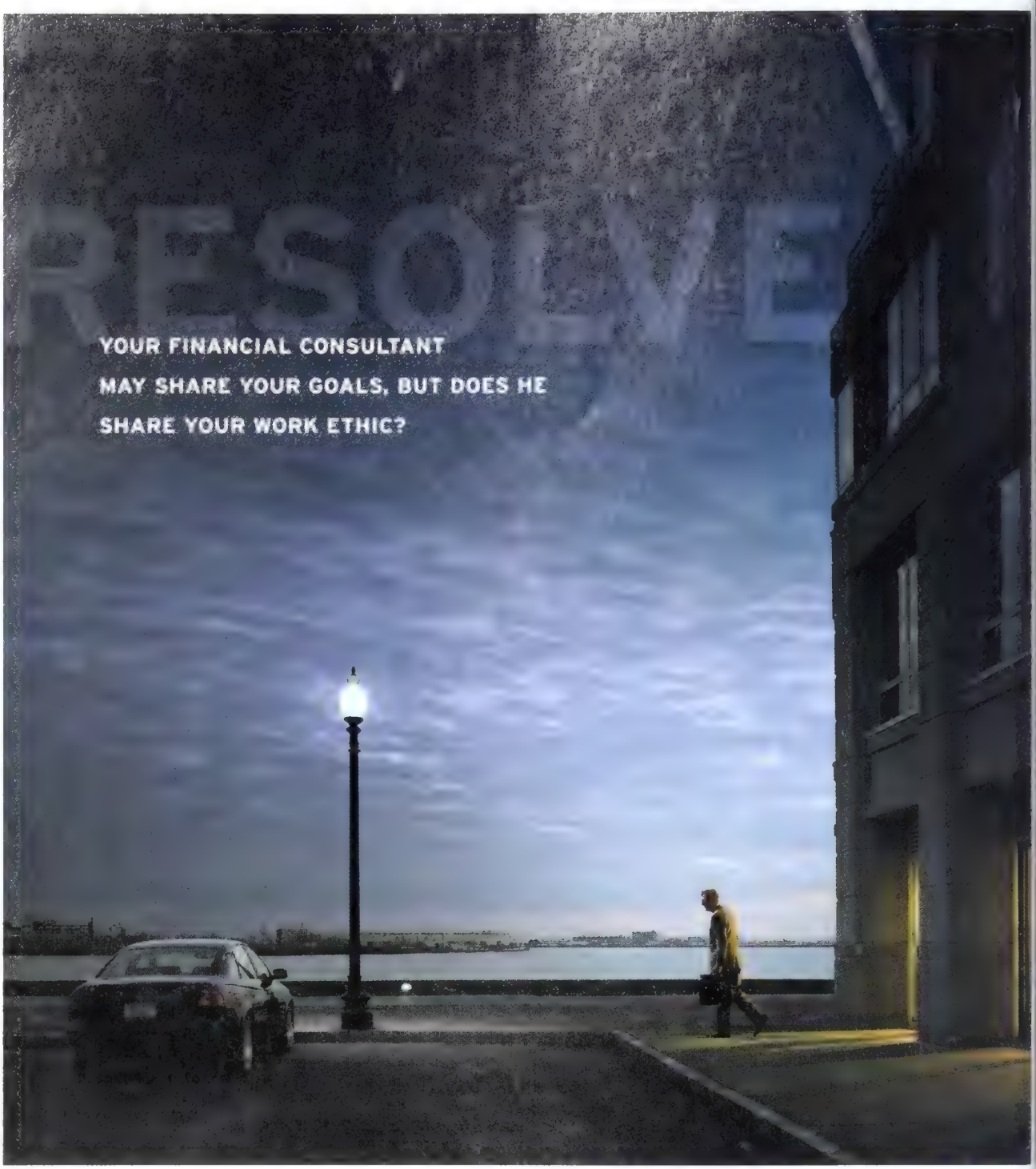



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# LETTERS

## Stand Up for Kansas

I was frustrated by Thomas Frank's mystification at what he calls "the Great Backlash" of working-class America ["Lie Down for America," Essay, April]. Although I sympathize with his despair over what results when working-class individuals confoundingly, and to their own detriment, display a preference for the rich and privileged, I was surprised by Frank's pointed lack of discussion related to the Democratic Party's failure to address working-class concerns substantively. Without that discussion, Frank is left to conclude, in typical elitist, paternalistic fashion, that the working class in his home state of Kansas simply do not know what's good for them.

*Leeanne Stratton*
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Thomas Frank neglects to stress that the Democrats have long abandoned the prairie-fire roots of populism, Progressivism, and even, to a great extent, the New Deal. Today, the party is run by lawyers, lobbyists, consultants, financiers, and corporate schemers who spend more time suppressing grassroots organizing than resisting the plutocrats at the trough, because as lawyers, lobbyists, and consultants they are plutocrats, too.

Democratic National Chairman Terry McAuliffe's $100 investment in a real-estate venture with a union pension fund eventually netted him a 50 percent interest in the project and $2.45 million. Whether Democrat or Republican, this is a swee deal if you can get it. Why derail th gravy train?

*Matthew Wills*
New York City

To lay all of the blame for th miseries and injustice of free-mark capitalism on conservatives or Re publicans, as Thomas Frank so el quently does, is to underestimate th corporate appeasement of the mo ern Democratic Party and wealth liberals in general. Democratic pres dential candidate John Kerry, for e ample, has not proven himself to b a populist, much less a "radical agra ian." Neither did Howard Dean John Edwards, despite their high pitched rhetoric. What the Dem crats and the nation sorely need is rural populist candidate not behol en to urban or industrial interest someone who does not live in mansion, or, as in Kerry's case, mo than one mansion.

Many rural and blue-collar Ame cans now vote Republican becau the Blue Democrats retreate decades ago to become a party of u ban and often decadent value Some of the blame for the radical-t reactionary shift of America's hear land lies with the Democrats, wh have adopted a compassionate cap talism that falls far short of suppor ing a genuine and robust alternativ

*John Kaufman*
Wauwatosa, Wis.

Tom Frank implies that it is "d ranged" to put one's social valu above economic interests, but libe als do this all the time. If they didn public defenders and earnest I League graduates teaching in ghet schools would not exist, nor wou tax-happy congressmen representi upscale suburbs.

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. E-mail should include letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to abridgment. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

ıt a "rebirth of nationalism," as
e author optimistically surmises,
t rather a vivid illustration of how
e forces of globalization now have
e world's most powerful military
ıchine at their complete disposal.

*lt Hays Jr.*
:ksonville, Fla.

### ray Cat Strut

Jay Kirk ["Aslan Resurrected," Fo-
, April] writes that mountain lions
e confined to the "fringes" of the
stern United States and are un-
ely to repopulate the East without
lp. I disagree. Since the 1960s,
ıen western states reclassified the
ountain lion from bountied preda-
r to game animal, providing at
ast some level of protection,
ugars have grown in population
d audacity. The cats have not
nfined themselves to remote,
inge" areas; on the contrary, many
ns now reside quite comfortably in
burbia. Cougars have recently
en seen in such densely settled ar-
s as suburban Minneapolis, down-
wn Omaha, and throughout the
n Francisco Bay area. In March a
curity camera captured the image
a cougar across the street from an
ange County high school, though
e cat's presence would almost sure-
have gone unnoticed if not for the
ectronic surveillance. Mountain
ns have proven far more adaptable
human development than scien-
ts once thought.
Unless America embarks on a new
ugar-extermination campaign—a
velopment I do not predict and
ould not support—I see no reason
ıy the highways and towns of the
idwest should stop the eastward
igration of cougars currently under
ıy. These resilient cats, eradicated
ım the eastern woods more than a
ntury ago, will likely find their way
ck within a few decades.

*wid Baron*
ston

Jay Kirk depicts a world in which
ld animals "live out an existence
ıder surveillance, on camera, wired
r sound, tracked by plane, auscul-

*Continued on page 102*


# JEFFREY MEYERS' life of
# SOMERSET MAUGHAM
## is "a marvelous biography," says Paul Theroux,
## "full of new material about the life and shrewd insights about the work."



Loren Rothschild



Portrait by Gerald Kelly, detail



*Of Human Bondage* was his masterpiece, *The Razor's Edge* his most spectacular bestseller. His *Rain* was among the most widely-read stories of its century.

He lived 91 years, wrote 78 books (42 million copies sold), once had four plays running simultaneously in London.

He was a secret agent in the Great War. He was persona grata to the royals of Britain, Hollywood, and the printed page.

Telling Maugham's story, Meyers reveals much that is new—about Maugham at Heidelburg and on Capri, about his medical training, his espionage, his quarrels with D. H. Lawrence and Edmund Wilson, his friendship with Nöel Coward, about his long-time lover Gerald Haxton, about his affairs with four attractive and accomplished women and his tormented 10-year marriage to one of them.

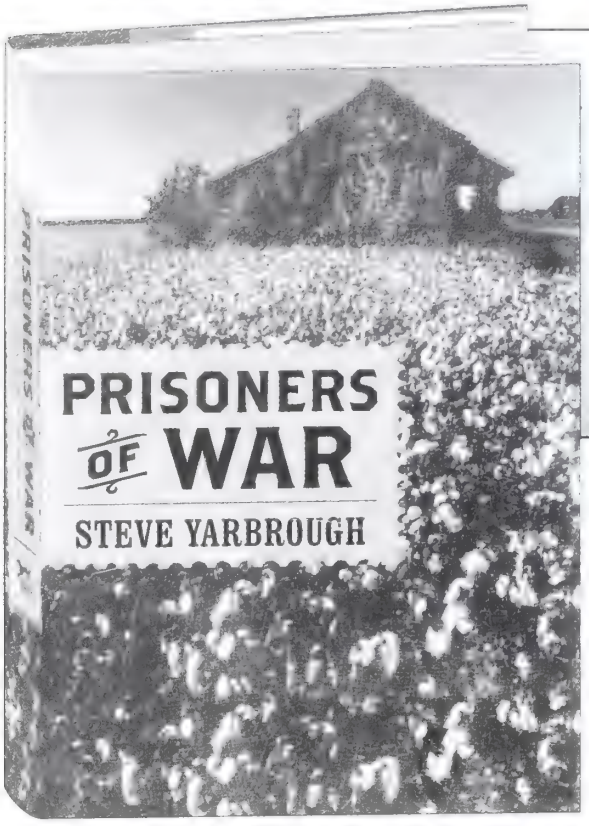
Meyers writes about Conrad's influence on Maugham and Maugham's on Orwell and Naipaul. He gives us, full scale, the brilliant, complex, worldly man whose work has held and dazzled a cultivated audience from the late Victorian era to the present.

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**Steve Yarbrough,** author of the critically acclaimed *Visible Spirits,* delivers "the best book of his impressive career... with a group of characters vivid, tainted, shell-shocked but still by god breathing." (Tom Franklin)

# PRISONERS OF WAR






HARRY BAUER

"**His characters are superbly fleshed out, and his settings so richly drawn** that when the action traverses the county line, the reader might feel as if he is leaving his own home town. Or escaping." —Ron Franscell, *Denver Post*

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"**A powerful, understated novel** [about] the grinding friction & hard jolts between black people and white people, men and women, mothers and sons, and soldiers facing the sacrifices of war."
—Hal Jacobs, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

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"**A timely war novel** that is refreshingly unpredictable [and whose] power resonates after it has ended"
—Susan Wickstrom, *The Oregonian*

***The New York Times Book Review*** **says, "Just when you thought you'd investigated the American experience of WWII from every angle imaginable, along comes Steve Yarbrough** with the story of a makeshift German P.O.W. camp built in the Mississippi Delta in the summer of 1943...Without neglecting the requisite small-town stragglers in this richly populous novel...Yarbrough writes with quiet compassion about the black population's reluctance to fight for a country that has so consistently betrayed its democratic promise. To this combustible setting will come a peculiar prisoner [who forces us] to confront what it means to be American, and all the unexpected—and often unwarranted—sacrifices that identity might comprise." —Laura C. Moser

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Furthermore, rural voters have ot changed their social views since e years of the "great commoner" 'illiam Jennings Bryan or Eugene ebs. It is the Democratic Party that is burned bridges with traditional merican morality. What would arry Truman or even John F. ennedy think of a party enamored abortion, multiculturalism, forced icularization, and gun control? The mple fact is that the Democratic rty chose to abandon cultural conrvatives a long time ago and conues to relentlessly silence and exude any voice in the party calling r a reexamination of its current, lturally left ideology.

A liberal who truly cares about ral America should demand that emocrats reclaim their heritage as party of traditional social values. ny other action renders solicitude r rural Americans insincere.

*att Dundon*
lison, N.J.

Thomas Frank draws much needed attention to one of the most striking social mysteries in contemporary America: the uncanny ability of the political right to forge an alliance between the ideologies of unfettered market capitalism and the forces of fundamentalist religious "morality." By managing to make this odd couple look like a natural love match, the right has successfully marginalized progressive voices throughout the working class. Although Frank is right that the G.O.P. has convinced the "heartland" to support economic policies that devastate their communities, his analysis of this phenomenon is flawed.

Frank characterizes the "culture war" in the United States as nothing but a smoke screen for the deployment of crony capitalist economic policy. Reducing all cultural "superstructure" to economic "substructure," Frank underestimates the crucial role that culture, values, and beliefs play in people's lives. By not taking cultural forces seriously, Frank recapitulates the very mistakes that have led the left into the ineffectual corner he describes so well.

Culture wars have always been real wars. If progressives fail to recognize this, the orthodoxy of the market and the orthodoxy of religion may assume even greater dominance across Red and Blue America.

*David Moser*
Seattle

The "Great Backlash" in this country will be undermined only when working-class Americans realize that vilifying homosexuality, outlawing abortion, and planting the Ten Commandments on local courthouse lawns will not lower burgeoning utility bills, replace disappearing jobs, or make the bankruptcy pill easier to swallow.

*Jason Sloat*
Missoula, Mont.

Liberals such as Thomas Frank, who ridicule those whose beliefs come directly from God themselves, believe, with the same absolute moral certainty, in the rightness of



*their* causes. A nation is not an engine of morality; it is an agglomeration of individuals striving to reach a working consensus in spite of their moral defects. Somehow Republicans seem to have understood this idea a little better than the current crop of Democrats.

*Al Rodbell*
Carlsbad, Calif.

Thomas Frank's "Lie Down for America" is insightful, but his assertions regarding the connection between income and voting are not quite valid. Fairfax County, Virginia, for example, supported Bush by only 49 to 48 percent. The other four counties cited (Cobb, Georgia; DuPage, Illinois; St. Charles, Missouri; Orange County, California) are more middle- to upper-middle-income, not upper-income or "upscale." Gore carried a number of truly upscale counties by large margins, like Montgomery, Maryland (63–34 percent); Westchester, New York (59–38 percent); Fairfield, Connecticut (52–43 percent); Montgomery, Pennsylvania (54–44 percent); and Bergen, New Jersey (55–42 percent).

National exit polls reveal that "upscale" America is almost evenly divided between the candidates, with only a slight edge for Bush. Finally, in almost all of the upscale or upper-middle-income areas, Bush received a lower level of support than almost all Republican presidential candidates since 1940, except for Goldwater in 1964.

*Albert J. Menendez*
Gaithersburg, Md.

After reading Thomas Frank's analysis of the "sons and daughters of toil" on the High Plains and their "self-denying votes," I might as well give up whatever social conscience I have and join the Republican Party. Why should I fight for the disenfranchised who insist on supporting candidates whose positions undermine their best interests? Why should I vote for the interests of those in "a region of struggling ranchers and dying farm towns" who don't support the elimination of corporate welfare and the regulation of globalization? After all, I am a member of the nation's privileged class. My children will have a fantastic education even if the public schools fail. I can afford to drive a gas-guzzling SUV no matter what the gas price, and I can buy up farmland that farmers can no longer afford to farm and sell it at huge profits to strip-mall developers and mansion builders.

By all accounts, I should be gleeful that the Republicans have bamboozled millions of Americans into voting against their economic interests, because my life has been enhanced by privatization, deregulation, and deunionization. As these Americans get their "fundamental interests wrong" and remain loyal to the G.O.P., I maintain my privileged status in our nation. The more Republicans—rich and established, poor and disenfranchised—the better for me.

*Andrea Broomfield*
Overland Park, Kans.

## The Global Pillage

John Ralston Saul's claim that globalization has collapsed is hardly substantiated ["The Collapse of Globalism," Essay, March]. Whether measured by direct foreign investment, trade, the movement of money and financial assets, the migration of people and laborers, the spread of American consumer culture, Internet access, the outsourcing of white-collar and service-sector jobs in the United States to Bangalore and elsewhere, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear fuel cycles, pollutants, greenhouse gases, and virulent diseases, globalization continues apace. American IT companies signed $119 billion worth of outsourcing contracts for white-collar and service-sector jobs in 2003, up 40 percent from the previous year. Even regions of the world "left out" of the globalization gold rush of the 1980s, such as Russia, China, and Eastern Europe, are striving to reap the economic fruits of a globalized marketplace.

For Saul to view globalization as nothing but a "grand ideology"—an empty political superstructure—ignores the underlying economic and technological foundation, not t mention those with a vested interes in its continuation.

*Erik Lindell*
Greenbush, N.Y.

In John Ralston Saul's zeal to la waste to the idea of globalism, th Davos set, and the rising emergin economies of the world, he omits tw key elements: China and culture.

In terms of sheer size and poten tial, China's fast track into th multinational free-market world is far stronger sign of globalism's suc cess than are the examples of Braz and Malaysia. As for culture, it certainly significant that teens i Qatar and the United Arab Em rates wearing U.S. fashions break dance to rappers Eminem and Tu pac in malls, and that today i China more than 300 millio homes tune in to American baske ball games to watch Yao Ming, th 7-foot 5-inch Houston Rocket player from Shanghai.

*Dominic Patten*
Toronto

Just like Francis Fukuyama's su gestion that we are living at the "er of history," John Ralston Saul's obitu ary for globalism is, I fear, somewh premature. As much as I would lik to agree with his overall thesis regar ing a rising worldwide disenchantmen with the process of globalization, glob alism's effective stranglehold on th formulation of domestic and foreig policy here in the United States much more telling.

The centrality of globalism as a ideology held by the powers that l in both major U.S. political parti has never been stronger. Whether th issues pertain to industrial and man facturing policy, trade, immigratio social services, national defense, even the very nature of represent tive government itself, Washingtor wholehearted commitment to th agenda of globalization seems unsha en by any other considerations.

The present, ongoing, seeming limitless military adventures of th present administration in Iraq an Afghanistan may not so much repr

# NOTEBOOK

## That's why the lady is a champ

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeit of our own behaviour,—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance. . . .*
—William Shakespeare, "King Lear"

Not having read through all the testimony presented to the 9/11 commission over the last fourteen months, I can't say with certainty that no witness blamed the loss of the World Trade Center on an eclipse of the sun or an untimely rising of the September moon. Attorney General John Ashcroft may have attributed the calamity to Satan as well as to the Clinton Administration, and it's conceivable that George Tenet named as villain an irregularity in the orbit of Mars; the newspapers didn't make available the complete transcript of their remarks, and one or another of the redacted paragraphs possibly mentions a spherical predominance known only to the astrologers at the Justice Department and the CIA.

But if the excuses unincorporated in the public record must be given up for lost, those brought forward into the light of the television cameras offered enough instruction (how to frame the unintelligible answer, when to introduce the meaningless phrase, with which finger to appoint the blame) that they can be understood not only as proofs of the Bush Administration's divorce from reality but also as a comprehensive exhibit of what has become the state of the art of self-exoneration.

Misjudgment in high places can be accepted as a constant; so can the habits of mind that favor criminal incompetence and the pretensions to imperial splendor. I don't find it surprising that when the United States was attacked by Saudi Arabian jihadists we responded by attacking a secular regime in Iraq. Germany in 1914 declared war on Russia and invaded France. All governments enchanted by the story of their own magnificence fall afoul of the same stupidities—the waste of money, the misreading of foreign intelligence reports, the breakdown of interior lines of communication, the inability to see further than three feet into the future. The variable is the character and quality of the excuses.

Fifty years ago in the United States the appearance of the truth was still a valuable commodity, which obliged the witnesses lying under oath to practice the techniques associated with the realist schools of nineteenth-century landscape and portrait painting. Public servants who appeared before Congress in the 1950s either had to honor the conventions then in place or withdraw into the silence protected by the Fifth Amendment. It wasn't simply a matter of conduct and deportment; the members of the committee were old-fashioned people, not yet postmodern, and apt to take a genuine interest in the literary distinctions between fiction and nonfiction. Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson accepted responsibility for their mistakes in Cuba and Vietnam, and President Richard Nixon was impeached for his unwillingness to produce even a facsimile of the truth.

The style had changed by the time the Washington theater company staged its 1987 production of the Iran-Contra hearings. Ronald Reagan was president (a man who was himself hard-pressed to know what was true and what was not), and it was no longer necessary to work up a plausible alibi. It was enough to lower one's voice to an agreeable murmur and say, with a gracious and accommodating smile, "I can't recall." Colin Powell, then senior military assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, exercised the option 56 times when he refused to tell Congress why the United States had sold missiles to despotic mullahs in Iran in return for money with which to fund, secretly and illegally, a fascist junta in Nicaragua. President Bill Clinton in the 1990s experimented with subtle refinements of language—"it depends upon what the meaning of the word 'is' means" or, "Well, again, it depends on how you define 'alone'"—but he was too much of an avant-garde figure to establish a reliable school of rhetoric. Most people didn't possess either his charm or his talent for improvising lectures on the importance of the universe that diverted unwelcome questions into a fog of boredom.

The senior managers of the Bush Administration came to Washington knowing how to manufacture disinformation in commercial quantity; appreciative of the uses of advanced technology and familiar with the idioms of opaque abstraction ("contingency planning process," "polycentric multi-polar paradigm," etc.) acquired during their years of experience in the country's corporate boardrooms and reactionary policy

institutes. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld [illegible] address a news conference ("Begin with an illogical premise and proceed perfectly logically to an illogical conclusion"), Rumsfeld is also fondly remembered for responding to [illegible] spokespersons could as easily have attributed to the oracle at Delphi: "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence."

Testifying before the 9/11 commission on March 23, Rumsfeld deployed a deft non sequitur to avoid answering a question as to whether American Air Force pilots were under orders on September 11 to shoot down civilian airplanes presumably under the control of terrorists. "I do not know," said Rumsfeld, "what they thought." Two weeks later at a Pentagon press briefing on the bad news then incoming from Iraq (forty American soldiers killed in sudden uprisings everywhere in the country, 1,500 Marines fighting in the streets of Fallujah, the charred and mutilated bodies of two American civilians hung from a bridge), Rumsfeld ascribed the misfortune to the hand of fate, beyond the comprehension of merely mortal men:

"We're trying to explain how things are going," he said, "and they are going as they are going. . . . Some things are going well and some things obviously are not going well. You're going to have good days and bad days."

The secretary's performance was admired both by the board of editors at the *Wall Street Journal* and the military [illegible] but it was no match for the genius of Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser, who appeared before the 9/11 commission [illegible] questions about the government's laissez-faire attitude toward terrorism during the spring and summer of 2001. The circumstances were [illegible] to the off-loading of accountability [illegible] wayward planet or a distant star. [illegible] word of dead Americans in the deserts south and west of Baghdad, and for three weeks Washington had been consumed with gossip about the government's failure to heed repeated warnings of an imminent attack on the United States by the agents of Al Qaeda. Richard Clarke, a former counterterrorism operative within the Bush Administration, was making the rounds of the Sunday talk-show circuit to say, loudly and convincingly, that the White House had done "a terrible job" of protecting the country against the rapidly multiplying host of its enemies. The available facts tended to support the judgment.

Not the most congenial of atmospheres in which to float the balloons of innocence. Dr. Rice managed to do so by postulating a world in which actions bear no relation to their consequences. Speaking only in the dialect of government acronym and careful to stay within the persona of the brightest girl on campus (condescending, self-assured, almost cute), Dr. Rice confined her testimony to a world made entirely of paper. Her office had filled out all the necessary forms, followed all the correct procedures, composed the appropriate number of power points. Meetings had been held, documents distributed, FBI field offices "tasked" to increase surveillance, the CIA "advised" to examine its conscience and search its data banks. Had the national security adviser known that death was destined to come to Manhattan from a clear blue sky, she would have moved heaven and earth to send it somewhere else, but she didn't know, and the moving of heaven and earth was a topic that President Bush discussed only with God. Dr. Rice was responsible for moving paper. She had moved it in all the ways it could be moved, and if some of it got lost or went to the wrong address, no human being was at fault. The fault was in the "structure" of the country's systems of foreign and domestic intelligence that on arriving in Washington she had found to be as dysfunctional as the stones on Easter Island. A legion of engineers would need [illegible] to reach all the computers how to talk to one another; the Bush Administration had at its disposal only 233 days, and in the meantime there was the "structure," also the "process" that made us guilty of our disasters.

Careful to draw the distinction between "strategic" and "tactical" thinking, Dr. Rice explained that it was no good pursuing terrorists in an ad hoc manner, one or two at a time as they happened to show up at random in a German night club or on an Indonesian beach, or attending flight schools in Phoenix and Minneapolis. Overly eager crisis managers like Richard Clarke might want to seize terrorists whenever and wherever they could be found, but this was a mistake, entirely the wrong approach, exposed to gunfire and subject to confusion. Terrorists must first be captured within a policy, a global as well as a regional policy, both supported with map briefing papers, and a diplomatic impact statement.

"America's Al Qaeda policy wasn't working because our Afghanistan policy wasn't working," Dr. Rice said, "and our Afghanistan policy wasn't working because our Pakistan policy wasn't working."

The Republican commissioners were quick to acknowledge the rightness of the argument (of course Pakistan, the source of all our sorrows), but some of the Democrats in the room were still curious as to why the President had paid so little attention to a CIA briefing paper presented to him in Texas on August 6 under the rubric "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike Inside the United States." The memorandum referred to the World Trade Center, to the FBI conducting seventy field investigations of Al Qaeda cells within the United States, also to "patterns of suspicious activity in the United States consistent with preparations for hijackings . . ."

Confronted with the most potentially damaging question put by the commission, Dr. Rice found in her answer the point at which her testimony ascended into the heavens of the sublime. The fault was not in man or beast or the constellation of Orion; the fault, my lords, was in the threat itself.

ın't sent by courier or distributed in licate, "was not a warning," because was not specific as to time, nor place, manner of attack."

Affronted by the presumption of a eat so vaguely worded and im-perly presented, Dr. Rice dis-sed it with an air of exasperated patience. Who did these people nk they were? What kind of rd-rate terrorist operation forgets enclose a return envelope? Per-os the commissioners were un-are of the complexity contained hin the national security advis-office—the number of top-secret letins arriving from China and Balkans as well as from Africa l the Middle East, the difficulty of ting out the strange accents on telephone intercepts, the brute ight of paper from which some-ly had to remove the stains of hu-n error. Under the circumstances, o had time to decode, much less e seriously, the angry muttering very Arab in Djibouti?

For three hours in front of the mmission Dr. Rice never once ndoned her position within the sule of virtual reality, her virtuoso formance acknowledged by the xt morning's headline in the *New k Post* ("The Lady Is a Champ") l by President Bush, who tele-oned her from his pickup truck in xas to offer his congratulations. t only had she mollified the ad-nistration's critics; she had proved worth of the new school of histry that borrows its aesthetic m surrealist painting and Dadaist etry. On the ground in Iraq the sh Administration's imbecile for-n policy had been reduced to a ambles of burning automobile es—the several Iraqi religious fac-ns hating America more than they ted one another, the Coalition ovisional Authority at a loss to ow how or to whom it was bound transfer sovereignty on June 30, foreseeable end to the killing in streets—but in the hall of mirrors at surrounds Dr. Rice the Ameri-n occupation glowed with the ile of victory because it has re-oved the "sources of violence and r and instability in the world's st dangerous region."

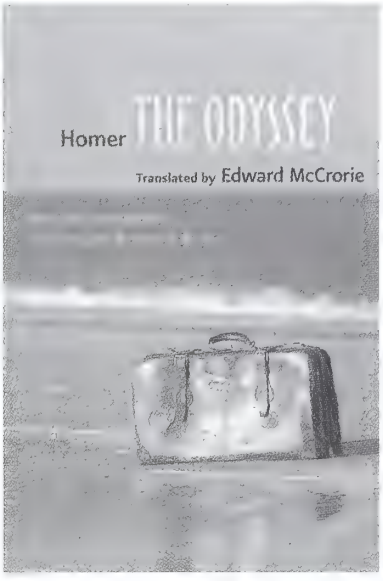
Having the courage to tell it like it isn't is why the lady is a champ. Simply by translating the story into the language of blameless abstraction she not only removed the fear and violence from Iraq but also lifted from the Bush Administration the burden of its mistakes. Everything was in order in the world of paper (was then, is now, forever will be); it was the events that were at fault, the incorrectly processed events and the treacherous office equipment.

The high-end Washington journalists say that President Bush gazes upon the pedantry of his national security adviser with the reverence that Alexander of Macedon once showed to Aristotle, and on the evidence of her testimony before the 9/11 commission I can understand why he does his best to imitate her rhetorical style. The technique is as easy to learn as the vocabulary of corporate advertising and, with the proviso that one must keep a straight face, a form of address that lends itself to the earnest recitation of heartfelt nonsense.

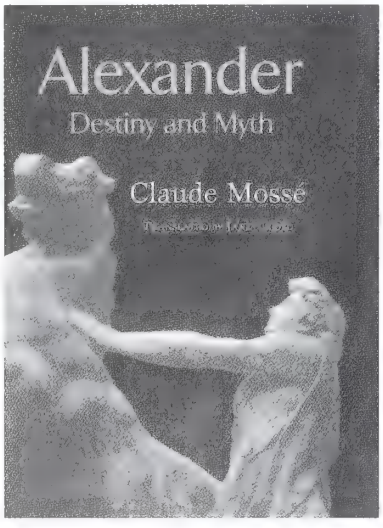
At his press conference on April 13 the President not only borrowed a number of tropes from Dr. Rice's tour de force on Capitol Hill (had we but known, "We would have moved heaven and earth"; "we hadn't got our relationship right with Pakistan yet," etc.) but also demonstrated his steadily improving skill at the moral vanishing act. Mr. Bush prefers the religious to the secular forms of escape into unreality, and so instead of appealing to the spherical predominances found in the realm of policy, he transferred the reason for the American presence in Iraq to a heavenly compulsion: "Freedom is the Almighty's gift to every man and woman in this world. And as the greatest power on the face of the earth, we have an obligation to help the spread of freedom." Also the obligation to remember that what is real is the theory of war that appears on the maps and the computer screen, not the experience of war that blots the flow charts with the smudges of human suffering, mutilation, and death. ■



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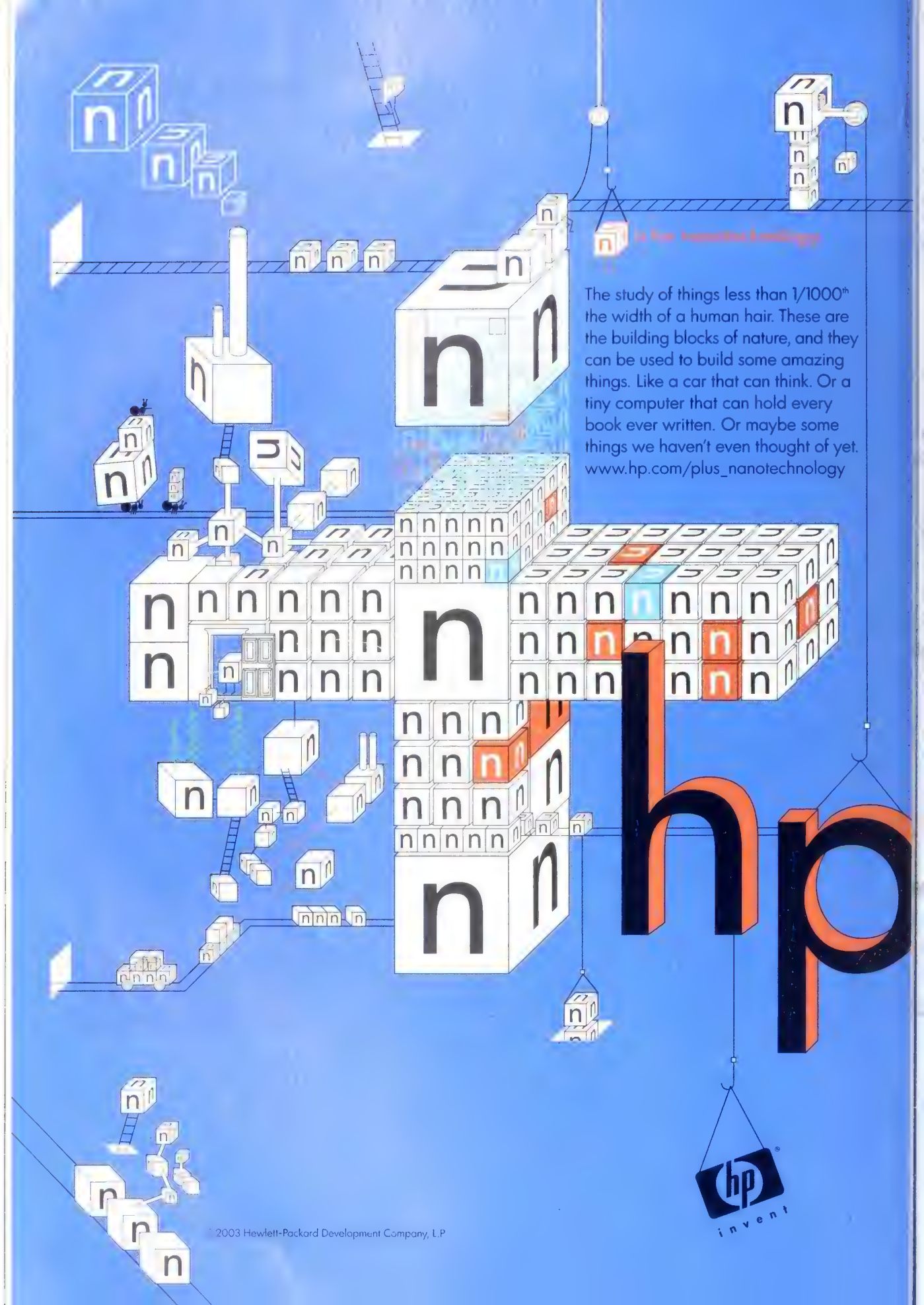



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# HARPER'S INDEX

Minimum U.S. spending on missile defense each year since President Reagan's 1983 "Star Wars" speech : $2,700,000,000
Number of the ten missile-defense components to be deployed this fall that have been field-tested as a system : 0
Amount that next year's Defense Department budget proposal requests for researching low-yield nuclear weapons : $9,000,000
Number of years that such research was illegal before Congress repealed the ban last November : 10
Number of countries given weapons-grade uranium since the 1950s under the U.S. Atoms for Peace program : 51
Minimum amount, per kilogram, that the U.S. charges "high income" countries to return spent nuclear fuel : $3,500
Number of actors, musicians, and clowns in a U.N. troupe touring Liberia to convince citizens to disarm : 101
Number of members of the Iraqi Communist Party who belong to the Governing Council : 1
Number of times that none-of-the-above won a Duma seat last winter in Ulyanovsk, Russia, Lenin's birthplace : 2
Chance that a Western European has a positive opinion of George W. Bush : 1 in 10
Average price per gallon Americans would have paid for gasoline in March if U.S. gas taxes were as high as Europe's : $2.31
Amount by which total Social Security contributions since 1983 exceed total benefit payments since then : $999,059,000,000
Year in which the Medicare hospital trust fund will be "completely exhausted," according to the trustees : 2019
Year in which trustees predicted in 1991 that the fund would be exhausted : 2005
Minimum number of U.S. surgical patients sewn up each year with sponges, clamps, or other tools left inside them : 1,500
Number of Americans who died in 2002 from infections they contracted while hospitalized for other ailments : 90,000
Number of accidents on Florida highways in 2002 caused by cars parked on the side of the road : 4,220
Ratio of the average number of vehicles to the number of children per U.S. household : 5:2
Ratio of the average number of television sets to the number of children : 7:2
Estimated revenue lost by an Oregon county since it suspended granting heterosexuals marriage licenses last March : $2,000
Minimum number of times a Houston woman stabbed her husband last year : 193
Estimated percentage of women in Pakistani prisons whose crime was fornication : 80
Average number of people who die every day in Bombay commuter-train accidents : 10
Percentage of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip who lack regular access to food : 40
Percentage who are at risk of losing regular access to food if conditions there persist or deteriorate : 31
Number of countries in which the average life expectancy was less than 40 in 2002 : 6
Number of African countries in which the average life expectancy has declined since 1978 : 22
Estimated percentage change since 1970 in sub-Saharan Africa's share of world trade : –57
Rank of Venice and Kuwait City among cities where hotels generate the most revenue per room : 1, 2
Estimated value of a painting that the Saudi ambassador has given George W. Bush for his future presidential library : $1,000,000
Value of the solid-gold model of a Saudi fortress on display in his father's presidential library : $1,000,000
Minimum number of the brand names mentioned in James Joyce's *Ulysses* that are still extant : 28
Number of the brand holders that are sponsoring Dublin's centennial Bloomsday celebration this month : 2
Number of Library of Congress book collections it would take to hold the data created worldwide in 2002 : 36,764
Chances that a sixth-grader at one Oklahoma City school was suspended for being disruptive during lunch last March 24 : 4 in 5
Chance that a British infantry recruit's reading and writing skills are no better than the average 11-year-old's : 1 in 2
Decimal places to which Japanese scientists have estimated pi : 1,241,100,000,000
Chances that God exists, according to a British physicist working as a risk analyst in Ohio : 2 in 3
Weight in carats of the 2,500-mile-diameter diamond resulting from the crystallization of the star BPM 37093 : $1 \times 10^{34}$
Street value of a rock of crack cocaine the size of the sun : $\$5.6 \times 10^{34}$

*Figures cited are adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of April 2004. Sources are listed on page 84.*
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# READINGS

[Report]

## PLANET OF SLUMS

*Adapted from an essay by Mike Davis, in the March/April issue of* New Left Review. *Davis is currently writing a book about slums that will be published by Verso next year.*

Sometime in the next year, a woman will give birth in the Lagos slum of Ajegunle, a young man will flee his village in west Java for the bright lights of Jakarta, or a farmer will move his impoverished family into one of Lima's innumerable *pueblos jovenes*. The exact event is unimportant and will pass entirely unnoticed. Nonetheless it will constitute a watershed in human history. For the first time, the urban population of the earth will outnumber the rural.

In 1950 there were 86 cities in the world with populations over one million; today there are 386, and by 2015 there will be at least 550. The present urban population (3 billion) is larger than the total population of the world in 1960. The global countryside, meanwhile, will reach its maximum population (3.3 billion) in 2020 and thereafter will begin to decline. As a result, cities will account for all future world population growth, which is expected to peak at about 9 billion in 2050.

Ninety-five percent of this final buildout of humanity will occur in the urban areas of developing countries, whose populations will double to nearly 4 billion over the next generation. The most celebrated result will be the burgeoning of new megacities with populations in excess of 8 million and, even more spectacularly, hypercities with more than 20 million inhabitants. By 2025, Asia alone could have ten or eleven conurbations that large, including Jakarta, Dhaka, and Karachi. Shanghai could have as many as 27 million residents in its huge estuarial metro-region. Bombay meanwhile is projected to attain a population of 33 million, though no one knows whether such gigantic concentrations of poverty are biologically or ecologically sustainable.

But if megacities are the brightest stars in the urban firmament, three quarters of the burden of population growth will be borne by faintly visible second-tier cities: places where, as U.N. researchers emphasize, "there is little or no planning to accommodate these people or provide them with services." In China the number of official cities has soared from 193 to 640 since 1978. In Africa, likewise, the supernova-like growth of a few giant cities such as Lagos (from 300,000 in 1950 to 10 million today) has been matched by the transformation of several dozen small towns and oases such as Ouagadougou, Nouakchott, Douala, and Antananarivo into cities larger than San Francisco or Manchester.

The dynamics of Third World urbanization both recapitulate and confound the precedents of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe and North America. In China the greatest industrial revolution in history is shifting a population the size of Europe's from rural villages to smog-choked, sky-climbing cities. In sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Asia, however, urbanization has been radically decoupled from industrialization, and even

from development per se. This "perverse" urban boom contradicts orthodox economic models that predict that the negative feedback of urban recession should slow or even reverse migration from the countryside.

The global forces pushing people from the countryside—mechanization in Java and India; food imports in Mexico, Haiti, and Kenya; civil war and drought throughout Africa; and everywhere the consolidation of small into large landholdings—seem to sustain urbanization even when the pull of the city is drastically weakened by economic depression. At the same time, rapid urban growth in the context of structural adjustment, currency devaluation, and state retrenchment has been a recipe for the inevitable mass production of slums. Much of the urban world, as a result, is rushing backward to the age of Dickens.

The astonishing prevalence of slums is the chief theme of the historic and somber report published last October by the United Nations' Human Settlements Programme. *The Challenge of Slums* (henceforth *Slums*) is the first truly global audit of urban poverty. It is unusual in that it breaks with traditional U.N. circumspection and self-censorship to squarely indict neoliberalism, especially the I.M.F.'s Structural Adjustment Programs: "The primary direction of both national and international interventions during the last 20 years has actually increased urban poverty and slums, increased exclusion and inequality, and weakened urban elites in their efforts to use cities as engines of growth."

The report uses a very conservative definition of "slum": many readers will be surprised by the U.N.'s finding that only 19.6 percent of urban Mexicans live in slums. Nonetheless, *Slums* estimates that there were about 924 million slum dwellers in 2001: nearly equal to the population of the world when the young Engels first ventured onto the mean streets of Manchester. Indeed, residents of slums constitute a staggering 78.2 percent of the urban population of the least developed countries and fully a third of the global urban population. Extrapolating from the age structures of most Third World cities, at least half of the slum population is under the age of twenty-five.

The world's highest percentages of slum dwellers are in Ethiopia (an astonishing 99.4 percent of the urban populations), Chad (99.1 percent), Afghanistan (98.5 percent), and Nepal (92.4 percent). The poorest urban populations, however, are probably in Kinshasa and Maputo, where two thirds of residents earn less than the cost of their minimum required daily nutrition. In Delhi planners complain bitterly about "slums within slums" as squatters take over the small open spaces of the peripheral resettlement colonies to which the old urban poor were brutally removed in the mid-1970s. In Cairo and Phnom Penh, recent arrivals squat or rent space on rooftops, creating slum cities in the air.

Whereas the classic slum was a decaying inner city, the new slums are more typically located on the edges of urban centers. The governor of Lagos State told reporters last year that "about two thirds of the state's total landmass of 3,577 square kilometers could be classified as shanties or slums." Indeed, writes a U.N. correspondent,

> Unlit highways run past canyons of smouldering garbage before giving way to dirt streets weaving through 200 slums, their sewers running with raw waste. So much of the city is a mystery. No one even knows for sure the size of the population—officially it is 6 million, but most experts estimate it at 10 million—let alone the number of murders each year [or] the rate of HIV infection.

Lagos, moreover, is simply the biggest node in the shantytown corridor of 70 million people that stretches from Abidjan to Ibadan, probably the biggest continuous footprint of urban poverty on earth.

Slum ecology, of course, revolves around the supply of settlement space, and indeed more than half of the residents of cities in the developing world occupy property illegally. National and local political machines usually acquiesce in informal settlement as long as they can control the political complexion of the slums and extract a regular flow of bribes or rents. Without formal land titles or home ownership, slum dwellers are forced into quasi-feudal dependencies, where disloyalty can mean eviction or even the razing of an entire district.

Infrastructure development, meanwhile, lags far behind the pace of urbanization, and peri-urban slum areas often have no formal utilities or sanitation whatsoever. As in early Victorian London, the contamination of water by human and animal waste remains the cause of the chronic diarrheal diseases that kill at least 2 million children each year. An estimated 57 percent of urban Africans lack access to basic sanitation, and in cities such as Nairobi the poor must rely on "flying toilets" (defecation into a plastic bag). In Bombay, meanwhile, the sanitation problem is defined by ratios of one toilet seat per 500 inhabitants in the poorer districts. Only 11 percent of poor neighborhoods in Manila and 18 percent in Dhaka have formal means to dispose of sewage. Quite apart from the incidence of the HIV/AIDS plague, the U.N. considers that two out of five African slum dwellers live in a poverty that is literally life-threatening.

The urban poor, furthermore, are everywhere forced to settle on hazardous and other-



*Nightrise," a photograph by George Ciardi, will be on display in December at the Schneider Gallery, in Chicago.*

wise unbuildable terrains—steep hill slopes, riverbanks, and floodplains. Likewise, they squat in the deadly shadows of refineries, chemical factories, toxic dumps, or in the margins of railroads and highways. Poverty, as a result, has "constructed" an urban disaster problem of unprecedented frequency and scope, as typified by chronic flooding in Manila, Dhaka, and Rio, pipeline conflagrations in Mexico City and Cubatão, the Bhopal catastrophe in India, and deadly mudslides in Caracas, La Paz, and Tegucigalpa. The disenfranchised communities of urban poor, in addition, are vulnerable to sudden outbursts of state violence such as the infamous 1990 bulldozing of the Maroko beach slum in Lagos (an eyesore for the wealthy neighboring community of Victoria Island) or the 1995 demolition in freezing weather of the huge squatter town of Zhejiangcun on the edge of Beijing.

As *Slums* emphasizes, the I.M.F.-mandated Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the 1980s displaced or immiserated millions of traditional urbanites and were, in fact, "deliberately anti-urban in nature," designed to reverse any "urban bias" in welfare policies, fiscal structure, or government investment. The I.M.F.—acting as bailiff for the big banks and backed by the Reagan and Bush administrations—offered poor countries everywhere the same poisoned chalice of devaluation, privatization, removal of import controls and food subsidies, enforced cost-recovery in health and education, and ruthless downsizing of the public sector. At the same time, SAPs devastated rural smallholders by eliminating subsidies and pushing them out, "sink or swim," into global commodity markets dominated by First World agribusiness.

In theory, of course, the 1990s should have righted the wrongs of the 1980s and allowed Third World cities to regain lost ground and bridge the chasms of inequality created by SAPs. The pain of adjustment should have been followed by the analgesic of globalization. Indeed, the 1990s, as *Slums* notes, were the first decade in which global urban development took place within almost utopian parameters of neoliberal market freedom:

[illegible] rapidly to the most [illegible] doctrine, one might have [illegible] erity and social justice.

In the event, however, urban poverty continued its relentless accumulation, and the gap between poor and rich countries widened, just as it had during the previous twenty years. By the end of the century, global inequality had reached an incredible Gini coefficient level of 0.66, the mathematical equivalent to a situation in which the poorest two thirds of the world receive zero income and the top third, everything.

The brutal tectonics of neoliberal globalization since 1978 are analogous to the catastrophic processes that shaped a "third world" in the first place, during the era of late Victorian imperialism. In the latter case, the forcible incorporation into the world market of the great subsistence peasantries of Asia and Africa entailed the famine deaths of millions and the uprooting of tens of millions more from traditional tenures. The end result, in Latin America as well, was rural "semi-proletarianization": the creation of a huge global class of impoverished semi-peasants and farm laborers. Structural adjustment, it would appear, has recently worked an equally fundamental reshaping of human futures. As the authors of *Slums* conclude: "instead of being a focus for growth and prosperity, the cities have become a dumping ground for a surplus population working in unskilled, unprotected and low-wage informal service industries and trade." "The rise of [this] informal sector," they declare bluntly, "is . . . a direct function of liberalization."

Overall, informal workers constitute about two fifths of the economically active population of the developing world. *Slums* estimates, moreover, that fully 90 percent of urban Africa's new jobs over the next decade will somehow come from the informal sector. Indeed, the global informal working class (overlapping but not identical with the slum population) is almost one billion strong, making it the fastest growing, and [illegible] unprecedented, social class on earth.

The pundits of bootstrap capitalism may see this enormous population of marginalized laborers, redundant civil servants, and ex-peasants as a frenzied beehive of ambitious entrepreneurs yearning for formal property rights and unregulated competitive space, but it makes more obvious sense to consider most informal workers as the "active" unemployed, who have no choice but to subsist by some means or starve. With even formal-sector urban wages in Africa so low that economists can't figure out how workers survive (the so-called low-wage puzzle), the informal tertiary sector has become an arena of extreme Darwinian competition among the poor.

Slums originate in the countryside, where unequal competition with large-scale agroindustry is tearing traditional rural societies apart. As rural areas lose their "storage capacity," slums take their place as a sink for surplus labor, which can only keep pace with subsistence by ever more heroic feats of self-exploitation and the further competitive subdivision of already densely filled survival niches.

Tendencies toward urban involution, of course, existed during the nineteenth century. The European industrial revolutions were incapable of absorbing the entire supply of displaced rural labor, especially after the 1870s, when Europe's agriculture was exposed to the devastating competition of the North American prairies. But mass immigration to the settler societies of the Americas and Oceania provided a safety valve that prevented the rise of mega-Dublins as well as the spread of the kind of underclass anarchism that had taken root in the poorest parts of southern Europe. Today, surplus labor, by contrast, faces unprecedented barriers to large-scale migration to the wealthier countries—a literal "great wall" of high-tech border enforcement. Likewise, controversial population-resettlement programs in "frontier" regions such as Amazonia, Tibet, Kalimantan, and Irian Jaya produce environmental devastation and ethnic conflict without substantially reducing urban poverty in Brazil, China, and Indonesia.

Thus only the slum remains as a fully franchised solution to the problem of warehousing the twenty-first century's surplus humanity. But aren't the great slums, as a terrified Victorian bourgeoisie once imagined, volcanoes waiting to erupt? Or does ruthless competition, as increasing numbers of poor people compete for the same scraps, ensure self-consuming communal violence as the highest form of urban involution? To what extent does an informal proletariat possess that most potent of Marxist talismans, "historical agency"? Can disincorporated labor be reincorporated into a global emancipatory project? Or is the sociology of protest in the immiserated megacity a regression to the pre-industrial urban mob, episodically explosive during consumption crises but otherwise easily managed by clientelism, populist spectacle, and appeals to ethnic unity? Or is some new, unexpected historical subject slouching toward the supercity?

For the moment at least, Marx has yielded the

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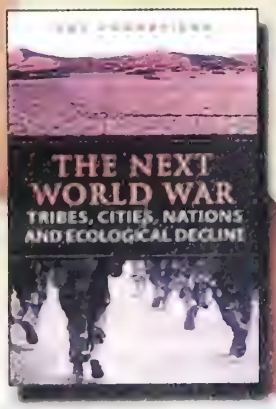



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Instead, listen to Mohammed and the Holy Ghost. If God died in the cities of the industrial revolution, he has risen again in the postindustrial cities of the developing world.

Today, populist Islam and Pentecostal Christianity (and, in Bombay, the cult of Shivaji) occupy the ideological space that once belonged to early twentieth-century socialism and anarchism. In Morocco, for instance, where according to some estimates [fifty million rural migrants are] absorbed into the teeming cities every year, Islamist movements like Justice and Welfare, founded by Sheikh Abdessalam Yassin, have become the real governments of the slums: organizing night schools, providing legal aid to victims of state abuse, buying medicine for the sick, subsidizing pilgrimages, and paying for funerals. As Moroccan prime minister Abderrahmane Youssoufi, the Socialist leader who was once exiled by the monarchy, recently admitted, "We [the left] have cut ourselves off from the people. We need to reconquer the popular quarters. The Islamists have seduced our natural electorate. They promise them heaven on earth." And indeed, a Justice and Welfare activist recognized that "confronted with the neglect of the state, and faced with the brutality of daily life, people discover, thanks to us, solidarity, self-help, fraternity. They understand that Islam is humanism."

The counterpart of populist Islam in the slums of Latin America and much of sub-Saharan Africa is Pentecostalism. Christianity, of course, is now in its majority a non-Western religion, and Pentecostalism is its most dynamic missionary in cities of poverty. Indeed, Pentecostalism is the first major world religion to have grown up almost entirely in the soil of the modern urban slum. Unified around spirit baptism, miracle healing, charismata, and a premillennial belief in a coming world war of capital and labor, early American Pentecostalism originated as a "prophetic democracy" whose rural and urban constituencies overlapped, respectively, with those of Populism and the Industrial Workers of the World. Its early missionaries yielded nothing to the I.W.W. in their vehement denunciations of the injustices of industrial capitalism and its inevitable destruction.

Since 1970, largely because of its appeal to slum women and its reputation for being color-blind, Pentecostalism has been growing into what is arguably the largest self-organized movement of urban poor people on the planet. Recent claims of "over 533 million Pentecostal/charismatics in the world in 2002" are probably hyperbolic, but there may well be half that number.

In contrast to populist Islam, which emphasizes civilizational continuity and the trans-class solidarity of faith, Pentecostalism, in the tradition of its African-American origins, retains a fundamentally exilic identity. Although, like Islam in the slums, it efficiently correlates itself to the survival needs of the informal working class (organizing self-help networks for poor women, offering faith healing as para-medicine, providing recovery from alcoholism and addiction, insulating children from the temptations of the street), its ultimate premise is that the urban world is corrupt, unjust, and unreformable. With the left still largely missing from the slums, the eschatology of Pentecostalism admirably refuses the inhuman destiny of the Third World city that *Slums* warns about. It also sanctifies those who, in every structural and existential sense, truly live in exile.

The new urban poor, indeed, are the ghosts at the table of world politics. Every debate about the war on terrorism, the future of the Middle East, the AIDS crisis in Africa, and the international narcotics trade is haunted by their presence and growing desperation. The helicopter gunships that hover over the megaslums of Gaza and Sadr City, the nightly gun battles in the shantytowns of Bogotá and Karachi, the bulldozers in Nairobi, Delhi, and Manila—is this not already an incipient world war between rich and poor?

[Feuilleton]

## MALLARME'S CAT

*From "Anecdotal Evidence," by Eliot Weinberger, in the Fall 2003 issue of* Conjunctions.

On a cold, rainy February night in New York, I remembered the story André Malraux used to tell—and which, at some remove, was told to me—about Mallarmé's cat, whose name, almost needless to say, was Blanche.

On a cold, rainy February night in Paris, a thin and bedraggled alley cat, wandering the streets, looks in the window of Mallarmé's house and sees a white, fat, and fluffy cat dozing in an overstuffed chair by a blazing fire. He taps on the window:

"Comrade cat, how can you live in luxury and sleep so peacefully when your brothers are out here in the streets starving?"

"Have no fear, comrade," Blanche replies. "I'm only pretending to be Mallarmé's cat."

[Dramatization]

# THE HOME FRONT

*From an April 9 posting on www.armywives.com.*

Want to pretend you are deployed? Here is a list of things you can do right in your own home:

1. Sleep on a cot in the garage.

2. Replace the garage door with a curtain.

3. Two hours after you go to sleep, have your wife or girlfriend whip open the curtain, shine a flashlight in your eyes, and mumble, "Sorry, wrong cot."

4. Hang a green plastic sheet down the middle of your bathtub and move the showerhead down to chest level. Keep four inches of soapy cold water on the floor. Stop cleaning the toilet and pee everywhere but in the toilet itself. For a more realistic experience, stop using your bathroom and use a neighbor's. Choose a neighbor who lives at least a quarter mile away.

5. When you take a shower, wear flip-flops and keep the lights off.

6. Every time there is a thunderstorm, go sit in a wobbly rocking chair and dump dirt on your head.

7. Put lube oil in your humidifier instead of water and set it on "high."

8. Don't watch TV except for movies in the middle of the night. Have your family vote on which movie to watch and then show a different one.

9. Leave a lawn mower running in your living room twenty-four hours a day.

10. Have the paperboy give you a haircut.

11. Buy a trash compactor and use it only once a week. Store up garbage in the other side of your bathtub.

12. Set your alarm clock to go off at random times during the night. When it goes off, jump out of bed and get to the shower as fast as you can. Simulate that there is no hot water by running out into your yard and using the garden hose.

13. Once a month, take every major appliance completely apart and put it back together again.

14. Use eighteen scoops of coffee per pot and allow it to sit for five or six hours before drinking.

15. Invite at least 185 people you don't really like because of their strange hygiene habits to come and visit for a couple of months. Exchange clothes with them.

16. Have a fluorescent lamp installed on the bottom of your coffee table and lie under it to read.

17. Raise the thresholds and lower the top sills of your front and back doors so that you either stumble or hit your head every time you pass through.

18. Keep a roll of toilet paper on your nightstand and bring it to the bathroom with you along with a gun and a flashlight.

19. Go to the bathroom when you only have to pass gas, "just in case."

20. Wash only fifteen items of laundry per week. Roll up the semi-wet clean clothes in a ball. Place them in a cloth sack in the corner of the garage where the cat pees. After a week, unroll them and, without ironing or removing the mildew, wear them to professional meetings and family gatherings. Pretend you don't know what you look or smell like.

21. Eat a single M&M every Sunday and convince yourself it's for malaria.

22. Demand each family member be limited to ten minutes per week for a morale phone call. Enforce this with your teenage daughter.

23. Sandbag the floor of your car to protect from mine blasts and fragmentation.

24. While traveling down roads in your car, stop at each overpass and culvert and inspect them for remotely detonated explosives before proceeding.

25. Fire off fifty cherry bombs simultaneously in your driveway at 3:00 A.M. When startled neighbors appear, tell them all is well, you are just registering mortars.

26. Spread gravel throughout your house and yard.

27. Make your family dig a survivability position with overhead cover in the back yard. Complain that the 4x4s are not on center and make them rebuild it.

28. When your five-year-old asks for a stick of gum, have him find the exact stick and flavor he wants on the Internet and print out the web page. Type up a form and staple the web page to the back. Submit the paperwork to your spouse for processing. After two weeks, give your son the gum.

29. Wait for the coldest/hottest day of the year and announce to your family that there will be no heat/air-conditioning that day so you can perform much needed maintenance on the heater/air conditioner. Tell them you are doing this so they won't get cold/hot.

30. Go to the most crime-infested place you can find, heavily armed, wearing a flak jacket and a Kevlar helmet. Set up shop in a tent in a vacant lot. Announce to the residents that you are there to help them.



*Narcissus*, by David Ratto, is currently on display at Koplin Del Rio Gallery, in Los Angeles.

[Résumés]

# HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL

*From classified advertisements submitted to the Security section of tacticaljobs.com, a notice board for people wanting to work for private-sector security and law-enforcement companies. Up to 20,000 private security contractors were estimated to be working in Iraq in April, making them the second-largest force in the country after the U.S. Army.*

U.S.M.C. 1992–95. Go anywhere do anything. Very fit, kick-ass. Guaranteed no one can beat me in a fight. Do any drug, take any pill, eliminate anyone (legally). No problem!

Very charismatic and a generally nice guy who will do most anything for a nominal fee. Owe my life to a lot of Americans and willing to do most anything to pay back.

M., Philadelphia

Short- or extremely long-range, hand-to-hand, or I'll bring my own. After these last few years with these people in the Mideast, I want to dispose of some of them.

S.H., Salt Springs, Fla.

Forty-two-year-old former Marine. Am an outstanding specimen of a Patriot. My physical/material accomplishments are commendable. There is no device that I cannot fix or create. Seeking Iraq deployment. Give me a call PLEASE.

R.F., Muscatine, Iowa

I'm a bodyguard in NYC. I'm an excellent driver, not a hero but not a coward either. I know when to run and when to fight, prefer to run, and fight another day.

D.M., Bronx, N.Y.

Former Marine seeks position where he could provide protection against attack by any fruitcake dumb enough to try to bring my charge harm. Don't like fish but will eat the neck of any invader. Semper Fi.

P.K., Warrington, Pa.

Seventh-generation American. Vietnam vet. World traveler. I "own" SE Asia. Many years there on and off after the war—numerous contacts and old friends in very high places. Will go anywhere, anytime, and complete any task. Tenacious, reliable, sober.

R.R.H., Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Disposition is quiet, calculating. Not a drinker/drug user. I blend in well. I have the wisdom of many years of experience, but still young enough and in shape (very fit, NO fat) to keep up with these young bucks of today.

Ready to go NOW!

J.L., Omaha

I ride a bicycle every day. I know how to fix flats quickly and do other bicycle maintenance. Can participate in specialized recon by bicycle. I am not a gun nut but can handle a weapon. I am trainable, follow orders, and always watch the backs of my partners. I am in very good physical shape. I have a B.A. in English from Ohio State University.

W.B., Clearwater, Fla.

Twenty years' construction management, 130 I.Q., and can handle hostile working conditions. Willing to work hard and prove Americans will not be intimidated by terrorists.

I am a firm believer that it is not for us to judge our enemies or those who would try to injure or kill us. I believe we should quickly and precisely terminate them if need be so Jesus Christ can judge them.

D.D., Hyrum, Utah

[Etiquette]

# SEMPER SENSITIVE

*From a handout that accompanies a weeklong course on Iraq's customs and history given to U.S. Marines as part of their training. The course, devised by the Marine Corps Division Schools, was introduced last September with the intention of improving relations between Iraqis and U.S. forces.*

GREETINGS

Handshakes given at introduction and when leaving. Handshakes may be loose or limp wristed. Iraqis will hold the handshake for longer than U.S. Do not pull away. Females may just touch the fingertips, but generally no contact between men and women.

If Arabs do not touch someone they meet, they either do not like the person or are restraining themselves because they think the person is unaccustomed to being touched.

To kiss the forehead, nose, or right hand of the person shows extreme respect.

Courtesy is valued and is not a weakness.

General rule: Treat every Iraqi as if he were a colonel.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Touching among same sex is not considered homosexual. Good friends often hold hands as a sign of friendship.

They keep no distance between individuals, even when sitting.

If you move back they will just close the distance again.

GESTURES

To signal a vehicle to stop, place arm in front of you, palm down, and then move entire arm up and down. If you simply face the palm toward a person, it means hello, not stop, as in America.

"That's enough, thank you"—patting heart a few times.

The thumbs-up used to be obscene, but children are accepting it and using it. They also know the thumbs-down.

The okay sign that Americans make is considered bad. It is an evil eye.

HOSPITALITY

Arabs are very generous and will do anything possible to be good hosts. You may be judged on how well you accept their hospitality.

Gifts may be given when you arrive at a meeting, etc., but are not important. The host will not make a fuss over it and will never open it in front of you. A good gift has no practical value and little commercial value; a fancy gift is like saying to the recipient, "I knew you couldn't afford this, so I bought it for you."

Always accept beverages or anything offered to you.

Food is given in large proportions.

Coffee being served means: meeting over.

RESPECT

Respect and courtesy show strength and masculinity.

Look into eyes (no sunglasses to be worn when speaking to Iraqis).

Show no fear, stand your ground.

Loyalty is important, so speaking badly about your unit, commanding officer, or America will cause you to lose their respect.

Family is the cornerstone of Arab society. Arabs value family honor, and their personal actions and achievements reflect the entire family.

Women hold the honor of the family, and therefore you should not stare or try to interact with them. A simple verbal greeting will suffice.

Do not ask men how their women are doing; instead, ask how the family is.

open relations. Arab women do not show
shorts will say to an Arab that you do not respect women.

Problems can often be solved by talking to
what he would do. For example, if your Iraqi
students are falling asleep in a patrolling class,
his students didn't pay attention. The problem

The group will set the tone/pace, not individual accomplishments. Arabs do not want to outdo the other guy, so they may hold back to stay with the group.

Do not shame or humiliate a man in public. Shaming a man will cause him and his family to be anti-Coalition.

The most important qualifier for all shame is for a third party to witness the act. If you must do something likely to cause shame, remove the person from view of others.

Shame is given by placing hoods over a detainee's head. Avoid this practice.

Placing a detainee on the ground or putting a foot on him implies you are God. This is one of the worst things we can do.

Arabs consider the following things unclean:

Feet or soles of feet.

Using the bathroom around others. Unlike Marines, who are used to open-air toilets, Arab men will not shower/use the bathroom together.

Bodily fluids (because of this they love tissue paper).

LAW

Spilling blood in a mosque is considered the highest crime.

The penalty for rape is death.

REALITY

May exaggerate to sound more appealing.

Arabs do not believe in cause and effect but rather in isolated incidents or the will of Allah. Speeding on a winding road did not cause the wreck, Allah willed it to happen, etc.

Small problems with a plan will mean terminating the entire plan.

Arabs perceive problems as someone's plot to make their life more unpleasant. We may view this as paranoia.

MISCELLANEOUS

Arabs make group decisions. Do not try to force an individual to make a decision without consulting the group first. If forced to make a quick decision without consulting with others, they feel no commitment to abide by it.

Safety is a foreign concept (everything happens because of Allah).

Amount of facial hair is considered directly proportional to religious faith.

They never forget a wrong done to them or a good deed done for them.

[Supplication]

# EACH TO HIS OWN

*From Saadat Hasan Manto's "Third Letter to Uncle Sam," which was written in 1954, during negotiations for a mutual-defense treaty between Pakistan and the United States. It was translated from the Urdu by Khalid Hasan, and published last September in the online magazine* Words Without Borders. *Manto, who died in 1955, is best known for his short story "Toba Tek Singh," about an exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan.*

Dear Uncle,

I write this after a long break. I fell ill because of this blasted liquor—it is poison, pure and simple. According to our poetic tradition, the treatment for illness lies in the elixir of joy served from a long-necked crystal jug by a slender temptress straight out of the quatrains of Omar Khayyam. However, I think that is all poetry. One can't even find an ugly servant boy with a mustache to play the cupbearer.

Beauty has fled this land. While women have come out from behind the veil, one look at them and you wish they had stayed behind it. Your Max Factor has made them even uglier. You send free wheat, free literature, free arms. Why not send a couple of hundred examples of pure American womanhood so that they could at least serve an elixir as it is supposed to be served?

The number of your nephews runs into the millions, but a nephew like yours truly you would not find even if you lit an atom bomb to look for him. Do pay me some attention therefore. All I need is an announcement from you that your country (may it please God to protect it till the end of time) will help my country (may God blight the distilleries of this land) acquire arms, in exchange for the services of Saadat Hasan Manto.

Overnight, my value will go up. Important people will come to visit my home. I will ask you to airmail me a typical American grin, which I will glue to my face so that I can

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### What You'll Learn

The lectures reveal several striking cts that can make argumentation acces- le and familiar to you.

First, the tools of formal logic, while essential and even definitive for mathematics and programming computers, are inadequate to decide most controversial issues. For example, the "ideal" of deductive reasoning, the syllogism ("All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.") is rarely used in real argument largely because it is useless.

- Second, arguments fall into a handful of distinctive categories—and the same issues are at stake each time one of these distinctive patterns occurs.
- Third, there are six kinds of evidence that can be advanced to prove an argument that something is true—and the same tests for truth can be applied to these types of evidence every time.
- Fourth, argumentation is not mere quarreling: it is the study of human communication that seeks to persuade through reasoned judgment, and it is a deeply social and cooperative practice. (Though there are places where winning an argument rather than finding the truth is prized, this is not why most of us exchange arguments.)

The course does not presume any special prior knowledge or training.

### A Great Teacher

Dr. Zarefsky is the Owen L. Coon Professor of Argumentation and Debate and Professor of Communication Studies at Northwestern University, where he has taught for over 30 years. The Student Government of Northwestern has elected Professor Zarefsky to the Honor Roll for Teaching *12 times*. A nationally recognized authority on rhetoric and argumentation, he has won several national awards for his own successes in debate and argumentation, and has coached National Championship debaters at Northwestern University.

He is also a distinguished author on communications. The National Communication Association has twice given its Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Rhetoric and Public Address to Dr. Zarefsky.

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receive them properly. Such a gun can have a thousand meanings. For instance, "you are an ass," "you are exceptionally brilliant," "I derived nothing but mental discomfort from this meeting," "you are a casual-wear shirt made in America," "you are a box of matches made in Pakistan," "you are a homemade herbal tonic," "you are Coca-Cola," etc.

I want to live in Pakistan because I love this [illegible] which has lodged itself permanently in my lungs. However, I will certainly visit your country so that I can get my health back. Barring my lungs, I will hand over every other organ in my body to your experts so that they may be made American.

I like the American way of life. I also like the design of your casual-wear shirt. It is both a good design and a good billboard. I also want a Packard so that when I go riding in it on the Mall, wearing that shirt, with a pipe gifted by you resting between my teeth, all the progressive and non-progressive writers of Lahore should come to realize that they have been wasting their time.

Look, Uncle, you will have to buy petrol for the car. But I promise to write a story as soon as I have the Packard that I will call "Iran's Nine Mounds of Oil and Radha." Believe me, the moment the story is printed, all this trouble about Iranian oil will end.

Another thing I would want from you would be a teeny-weeny atom bomb, because for long I have wished to perform a certain good deed. You will naturally want to know what.

You have done many good deeds yourself and continue to do them. You decimated Hiroshima. You turned Nagasaki into smoke and dust. Each to his own. All I want you to do is to send me a cleaning product. It is like this: out there, many mullah types pick up a stone after urinating and with one hand inside their untied *shalwar*, they use the stone to absorb the after-drops of urine as they resume their walk. This they do in full public view. All I want is to be able to pull out the atom bomb you will send me and lob it at the mullah so that he turns to smoke along with the stone he was holding.

As for your military pact with us, it is remarkable and should be maintained. You should sign something similar with India. Sell all your old condemned arms to the two of us, the ones you used in the last war. This junk will thus be off your hands, and your armament factories will not remain idle.

Jawaharlal Nehru [then prime minister of India] is a Kashmiri, so you should send him a gun, which should go off when it is placed in the sun. I am a Kashmiri too, but a Muslim, which is why I have asked for a tiny atom bomb for myself.

The American topcoats are also excellent, and without them our Landa Bazaar would be quite barren. But why don't you send us trousers as well? Don't you ever take off your trousers? If you do, you probably ship them to India. There has to be a strategy to it. When there is a war, it will be your jackets and your trousers. These two will fight each other using arms supplied by you.

One more thing. We can't seem to draft a constitution. Do kindly ship us some experts, because while a nation can manage without a national anthem, it cannot do without a constitution, unless that is your wish.

I now close my letter with a freestyle kiss to Hedy Lamarr.

Your nephew,
Saadat Hasan Manto

[Diagnosis]

## HELLO, DOLLY!

*From an article by Ken Limmat and F. A. Mann in the April 2003 issue of the* American Journal of Roentgenology.

A thirty-five-year-old man presented with severe abdominal pain and distension but normal vital signs. An abdominal radiograph showed multiple rounded objects, some in the shape of a head with a pointed nose. The patient stated that he had ingested multiple heads of a popular children's toy doll over the course of several days. He declared that swallowing dolls' heads was his habit for anal autoerotic gratification.

Certain dolls are icons of American popular culture. For example, an Internet search for "Barbie doll" renders more than 200,000 hits, and Barbie remains an integral part of many toy collections of millions of children all over the globe. Familiarity with the radiographic appearance of this famous American doll may help to differentiate the foreign bodies in the bowel of our patient from packages of illicit drugs ingested by body packers.

This case illustrates how icons of popular culture affect all aspects of life and can present emergently to the radiologist, who should keep in mind that the human imagination may not follow clinical algorithms.

[Exhortation]

# OUT FOR BLOOD

*From an email sent to approximately 170 members of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority at the University of Missouri at Columbia by the chapter's blood-donation coordinator, Christie Key, shortly before a competitive blood drive in April. The sorority later apologized for the email, and the chapter was ordered to forfeit any points it had earned from the drive.*

Subject: BLOOD!! SO IMPORTANT!!

Hi girls. As you probably know, the blood drive starts tomorrow. Before I get into the logistics, I need to stress one final time how incredibly important blood is for Greek Week. Honestly, if we don't have 100% of our house give, we will not place, in Blood or overall. This affects how we are viewed by Nationals, the Greek Community in general, and also any new pledge classes for the future. Would you want to join a house that can't win anything? Something as simple and selfless as giving blood? I know that I am part of a house that CAN do this and WILL do this, right?? So go, give. I know it isn't the most pleasant experience, but remember that you are saving three lives, and it might be somebody you know . . . and if you don't care to give blood for that reason, remember how hard the liaisons have been working, not to forget the heads, athletes, skitters, dancers, etc. You owe it to us to make our hard work pay off, so please just give!!!

Now (and this is SO important!) make SURE that you are TEN minutes early to your assigned blood time. If you are not there on time, we will know. If you think you're going to get away with not going, don't even try it. We're not messing around; punishment for not giving blood is going to be quite severe.

If you know FOR A FACT that you cannot give, go anyway. They will defer you if there is a VALID reason for not being able to donate. (By VALID reason, I really mean it. I don't care if you got a tattoo last week—LIE. I don't care if you have a cold. Suck it up. We all do. LIE. Recent piercings? LIE. Even if you are going to use the "Do Not Use My Blood" sticker, GIVE ANYWAY.)

We're not trying to be scary, we just need you to realize what a big deal this is. Gamma Phi has all the potential to win Greek Week, so let's do it. I don't love giving blood either, but when it's done you get good food, and, more importantly, you realize that you just saved three lives.

Thanks for listening. Hopefully this is the last email until we're congratulating you on how much we rocked the blood drive!

Thanks girls!

[Chronicle]

# DELTA INTERVAL

*By Drew Johnson, from the 2003 issue of* Story Quarterly.

On the first day, we cut the grass. In some places it is up to our shoulders, and in these places it is hot, heavy work. At first, Ray and I fight over the jimmy blade, which is small and light and curves from its long handle, up and around like a half-finished question mark. With this blade, the grass falls in easy, simple motions, the arms kept straight and tensed, but you can only work like this for short stretches before the tendons begin to beg and muscles cramp up.

Ray and I have just met, and despite the fact that he is old enough to be my father, we find ourselves in a testing mood and do not break for an hour. It is this hour that is only half lit, the mosquitoes are sleeping, and it is my favorite hour. No one is expected to speak, and the grass falls audibly with the sound of a heavy drunken whisper.

The man who does not have the jimmy is stuck with the kaiser blade. The kaiser is heavier, and the blade is short—an angry thickset German comma—and sharp too, but your arms move when you swing it and the rhythm is harder to find. So the man with the kaiser will use it as long he can stand and then without a word hold it out for the other man, who will take it reluctantly and give up the jimmy, striding through the fallen grass soaked with dew that is cool and briefly clean until it meets and mixes with sweat.

As we move up the rise, small trees are growing, and these are stubborn enough that they will only give way to the kaiser, which is now appreciated. its heavy thuds signal the way for the first tentative conversations, and my time is over.

This is the flattest place I don't have to imagine, the Mississippi Delta, the flattest place I know. All that rises here is man-made, and we work bracketed by the mile-away levee at our backs and the strange curve of the centuries-old native mounds before us. We have given over our blades for shovels and are taking the tops of the mounds off, having trimmed them. There



Fox Hunt I, *by Alex Kanevsky, can be viewed at Somerville Manning Gallery, in Greenville, Delaware.*

are dead men here and they huddle beneath us. We are here to dig them up. We will threaten and cajole with our shovels and trowels, and they will tell us about themselves.

Ray drinks half a fifth every night, and a whole on Saturday night, which is followed by no morning. It is always Jim Beam, which I smell on such mornings as there are, for he sweats, though we do not speak of it, and as the pit deepens, the air becomes close with sweat. The dirt comes away reluctantly; it is mostly clay and, sorry to say, it does not sift for shit.

Ray and I share a room in a hunting cabin, and he sleeps opposite me and snores. The entire field crew sleeps here, but Ray and I share a space because I snore as well, a noisy enough duel with no one to hear it if I am able to sleep. It is a summer of floods, a summer when Iowa and Missouri are wiped clean, and the water this far south has been slowly rising. Each night I wonder if I will wake up wet and panicky, the water invisible in the dark.

Sometimes I dream of water and wake up with a start to stare at Ray and his open eyes. Ray sleeps with his eyes open, which does not bother me, except when I wake like this. Then it is like reaching the place where a limit of danger meets a limit of safety, only to be pushed back across. In dreams I suffer a great variety of injuries, but the water is the worst. I dream that I have been lying in it, asleep but aware, and that a deep ache has set in as my flesh loosens—this a prelude to a deeper rot.

It is said that if you take a shovel out of a truck in Mississippi, Sam Holiday will hear it, and if you put it in the ground, he'll know

where you are. Ours is a passing interest, Ray's and mine, but when Ray has gone back to his family and I to the rest of my life, leaving this place, this state, for good and for all, Holiday will still be considering the dirt, Holiday taciturn in the best way, not only in his bearing but in his mind. He does not share the cabin with the rest of us but, rising early, drives two hours up from below Clarksdale to meet us each morning by the mounds. Setting us in motion, he seems to appear only when we have found something and then is hardly surprised.

After four days of dirt we find the fired clay that was a house. We map the ruins within inches, on paper, and then go below them. These unnamed people were not quite the people who called themselves Chickasaw and Choctaw, neatly divided and so each fighting the other. These people buried themselves beneath their houses. So as we go through the floor we know we will find them, and we bite less deeply with our shovels.

While we do this, Ray tells me about his youth and how he was a truck driver, a soldier—a private, a corporal, a convict, and then a private again. He tells me about his boys, eight and eleven. And he tells me all this while we work, and he tells me again when he is drunk, and I know the stories by rote, and still I hear them again. He tells me past the point of my retelling them, until I have been brutalized into that most complacent listener.

One late afternoon we are all out behind the cabin, watching the river going by, taking an old unused dock into itself as inexorably as a star comes apart. Ray is cleaning his pistol; in the cabin I alone am without one. Others drift up to look at the strange Czech automatic, and Ray takes an empty fifth down to the half-submerged dock and sets it up. Another worker, carrying a garbage bag of empty beer bottles, wades in beside Ray and begins setting them up. The first bottle, Ray's fifth, glows almost white in the sun.

The shooting begins slowly, everyone rusty, no one wanting to mess it up too badly and have to hear about it for the rest of the dig. But even before he's warmed up, Ray is clearly best, and is soon one-handing shots in groups of twos and threes, working through the supply of empties, making a physical account of how much we've drunk. The hard tap and tinny ring and skish of the bullets are loud enough, and new enough, that I can't help but jump a little. Ray seems not to notice, but coming back from the dock, having set up another round, Ray hands his pistol to me. Everyone waits, smiling. Ray looks at me and says, "Shoot the bottles, not me, and we'll be fine." He grins, and I try to get the feel and balance of the thing. I have never really held a gun in my life and will not need to, so to aim awkwardly is almost right, it proves something, and my stance is the balance of the world at a remove, of reaching the end of your second decade without a gun in your hand. I feel like some badly acted cop, but I fool myself enough that when the gun fires I am confused when none of the five bottles bursts. The bullet makes a wound in the river, and I hear small laughter behind me. Again I pull the trigger and miss everything but the river. An open laugh from somewhere behind me. Ray makes an instructor's gesture, a twist of thumb and wrist, mutters something. Still I miss.

"He's shootin' the river!" is Ray's giddy excuse. "Shoot the river, boy!" and for the hell of it, I empty the rest of the magazine into the river. The flash and jerk and smell of it are heady in the damp air, and I'm a bit loose, easy and embarrassed—but not feeling it, like a drunk on the edge who can't get worried. Ray takes back his pistol and slowly reloads it, his hands weird with the motion of something learned to be done quick slowed down.

Holiday, the head of the dig, walks up to see what trouble we're playing at. Everyone talks guns with him for a few minutes, and the sun drops lower. The brown beer bottles are a glassy yellow, brighter now than the sun that lights them. They're there, on the tail, at attention, as Mr. Holiday begins to speak.

"Last week, I had to go before the State Legislature and justify Archives' budget to a bunch of men who want to cut and prune and pinch. I have to do it every year, and it is seldom very much fun." Holiday starts slow and, out of deference, we listen.

"So when I get in there, after sitting down and saying hello, I can tell that I'm gonna get it from this one fella sitting way up and to the left. Found out later he was the standard case—contractor, good family, could handle anything his little corner of the state offered but was expected to keep going up. So he was elected almost as a way of getting him out, so other folks would have room to be important. He looked about that unhappy, not out of his depth so much as at it. But he doesn't say much at first, so I go ahead and forget about him. Then, as we're coming round the corner and I've taken a mild dusting, not too bad, the man finally speaks up. He says, 'Sir, your department is the State Department of Archives and History?' And I say, 'Yes it is.' And he says, 'Would you say that your department's job is to discover and catalogue and record the history of the state of Mississippi?' And I said that that seemed a serviceable definition of what we do. And he

get of how many millions of dollars?' And I one more question and asks, 'And your depart- ing back like I'm beat, and me and everyone else wonder ing just how, 'Well in that case, sir,

[Detritus]

## FRUITS OF THE SEA

*The following items were among those found in the last two years during California's Coastal Cleanup Day, an annual event in which volunteers remove debris from the state's shorelines. Since the program began in 1985, 8.5 million pounds of garbage have been removed.*

4-foot-long stuffed toy salmon
horse's head
urinal drain
cat's headstone stating "Your soul is safe now! The spirit is home. Rest in God's Peace."
baby bird in a jar
2 phone booths
styrofoam Tiki god
home pregnancy test
Barbie doll with a nail through its hand
pit bull chained to a tree
Scooby Doo underwear
10 dead leopard sharks
plastic eyeball
wooden duck
"Just Married" sign
half a bowling ball
Led Zeppelin album
preserved jalapeños
fuzzy dice
check written to Taco Bell for $8.78
Dracula teeth
crutch
foam foot advertising a fungus cream
half a turtle shell with leg attached
bird burial box stating "My beloved Chico is dead in this box. He died of old age."
porcupine bones
divorce papers
dead goats in a bag

Holiday smiles through the late-afternoon laughter. But now he takes a pistol and for a moment sights down toward the dock. He starts to speak again, then doesn't, then does. "My father skippered a submarine in the Pacific. He shipped out right after mobilization began. I was very young, and so the one time he came back, as old as I had got, I felt younger. I got to have a rifle when he found I didn't have one already, and as there was only a little time, he took me out to teach me that day.

"We didn't go for squirrels. When I asked about it, he was vague, so I stayed quiet while he drove us onto the base and down to the pier. We went down onto that funny narrow deck a sub has, makes you feel like you're trying to balance on a whale, and he pulled out a handful of little metal muffin cups from a wooden box from my mother's kitchen, still dusted with flour. He showed me how to stand, sight, and then squeeze. Then he tossed a few down to float on the water and I had to put holes in them and then they'd fold up with the force of the bullet and settle down out of sight. I wasn't bad at it, but my father was still pretty quiet—only if I looked right at him would he smile sudden and very wide—and so, after a while, we drove home. The ship—the other ship—was called *Asagumo*, the destroyer."

Holiday smiles another smile, this one by way of apology, hands the pistol back to Ray, and walks up to the cabin. The rest of us follow him in. For another hour I can hear Ray working through the rest of the bottles, three at a time, four at a time. After his bullets run out, I hear him throwing the bottles against the dock, breathing hard and swearing in the near-dark. When he does come in, I am in bed. Before he follows suit, he glances back at me as if he has forgotten something, then speaks, "Goddamn gooks."

The next day, at the bottom of the pit, I find the pieces of a boy. I am slipping thin layers of dirt off, taking the earth apart in existing pieces rather than making parts as I go. The colors of the clay seem artistic, like murals; I try to read them but they are natural, and closed. On the floor I see something brown and pale. It seems to be the crushed cheek of a dead man, suspended in the earth.

We begin to use the small trowels in order to go deeper, sculpting and finding the ground's embrace, its hold on the bones. The burial begins to form a kind of articulated relief, the raised long bones lifting up out of darker soil. Small distances in the pelvis and face are measured, and we put a number to the time that these bones existed, before they became bones in the sense of



COURTESY ANDREA ROSEN GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY. © GILLIAN CARNEGIE

Blue Cheer, *by Gillian Carnegie. Her work was on display this spring at Galerie Gisela Capitain, in Cologne.*

earth. Although his skull is crushed, it is complete, and is revealed. The names and numbers we put to him become prismatic. For me at least, they accumulate but will not cohere.

The grainy bones come away from the earth, and we look at how the long bones are strangely eaten and twisted, gnarled in a way that resembles the gnawed beaver limbs embedded in creek beds. It becomes apparent that this is syphilis, that these marks are the tracks of the disease and its slow progression. I can see the disease's tracks more clearly than the boy who suffered them.

So I sit, during a break, my legs splayed, holding my hat and wondering at this bonemeal boy in front of me, who died in pain, and was buried here. Here, the suffering has been preserved as well as the sufferer. It is not enough, though. It remains a chance encounter. A bump with a stranger. A pardon me, sir. He is in my pit, or I am in his.

There is all kinds of water in the air today, but it is the rain we watch for. When it comes we'll have to cover the burial quickly, and already we have raised a little levee to guide the water around and past and down, back off this tiny rise, into the flat expanse before us.

We have the boy up on a bier of earth now. He is lying on his right side, and his legs cross at the middle of the femurs and calves. His arms are huddled against his collapsed rib cage and the fallen skull is tipped back, the mandible aside and down among fragments of collarbone. One of his teeth has slipped out and lies in the no-man's-land between the palate and the jaw. A vast mouth, if you read it wrong.

I look up over the edge of the pit as the air thickens. Staring out, I can just see it. I call out, "Rain," but everyone has seen it at the same time. We cover the pit, weighing the tarp down with pieces of the mound's masonry. There is nowhere to go and so we stand, watching it coming. The flatness here allows you to see rain completely and far away, sometimes miles, advancing like a solid wall across the fields. It doesn't entirely make sense when you look at it this way, for the storm seems somehow more vast but also finite—a whole shape that can be described before it engulfs you.

I take five steps forward and five back, momentarily taken with the idea that there is nowhere to go. At five hundred yards we can [illegible] the force of the drops raising dust and then pressing it back down to mud. We are all silent and then the storm drinks the distance, a hundred yards at a time. In the long, last second, [illegible] and I let me head fall back. I can feel the fat drops smacking my body, making a loud flat noise, and then I am saturated, and the rain slides off, its voice lowered. The water tears up the bare earth and fairy ryolers glide down the face of the mound to pool around my boots.

That night, Ray and I are sitting above the muddy grave. The storm has opened up and we can see the night here and there. I drift into abstraction, trying to sort out the sky from the changing puzzle pieces, but I don't know the stars' patterns well enough to recognize them from only a part. That and Ray's drunken mumblings bring me back.

We're out on the mound tonight trying to outguess the pothunters. Everything's a godawful muddy mess and since no one would reasonably want to be sitting out here, it would be a grand time to steal some pots. It's been a bad summer for it and it's ten grand and upwards that an unbroken pot will bring once it's vanished into those channels. So Ray and I are out here with his Czech pistol and a borrowed revolver. We don't really expect anything; the mud is unpleasant enough whether you're legal or not.

Ray leans back in the night, his pistol and his fifth by his feet, then sits up and speaks, but I can't understand. He tries again, but it comes out in a series of choppy wet coughs. He gives up and takes a long drink from the fifth, wipes his mouth, stands up, sticks the gun in his belt, and says, "Time to take a piss."

He stumbles away, with the chatter a drunk makes coming back to me from the dark. Then I can't hear him anymore and the night gets quiet; even the crickets are low.

I sit watching my borrowed pistol. It's a whole thing, and it makes more sense on its own than the dead boy behind me. I sight down the barrel into the dark. There is nothing to see. I place my hand and the pistol in it on my shoulder and rest my head against them. With my eyes shut, the sound of rushing blood in my ear fills the world, and there is no mistaking it for the sea.

Then there is a crash, and the ground to my right jumps. I shout Ray's name. I can hear him laughing out there and then the crash again as he fires. The ground on my left sprays me with loose dirt. I can't move. *The joke won't miss, he won't fuck up. I won't get shot.* So I must sit, trying to be an easy target to miss, for some reason holding the revolver as if I might shoot back. Ray keeps firing, nothing as close as the first two, but I start shaking anyway.

Then Ray emerges from the dark, belt unbuckled, pistol in hand, a great grin on his face. He says nothing to me, but sits down facing the empty fifth, and in a little while he leans back and passes out. I am trembling, and I shout his name from three feet away and get nothing. So I reach over, point at the bottle with a gesture so easy, a rhythm to this violence. Feeling the trigger give, I let the hammer fall in the dark and make the loudest noise I have ever made. Ray's fifth leaps, scatters into pieces, and comes down still. Pinpricks of glass stand in the mud, and fragments, bright with whiskey, cover his boots and shins. Ray shifts but does not wake.

Before the bones come out of the ground, we map how they lie, and when I close my eyes I can see it, in stages, laid out in the earth. For everyone else, there is a picture, and I am in the pit for scale, laid out as straightforwardly as he is not—on my back, my feet together. I turn my head to look him full in the face, but the pit is cramped and his head tipped back. Instead of his averted eyes, I am staring through the gaping mouth into the vertebrae, jumbled together like a train wreck. I move my eyes down, at his cuddled arms, the thicket of ribs. Picking out the trace of spine, my eyes follow it up and rest on the skull. I wait for the shutter to snap, the earth impossibly cool beneath my cheek.

That I climb into the bed of the pickup truck, ready to go, is not important. The tree line is as far as it is, the mounds are where they are—their dimensions more impressive than their motivations. I lie back and watch the uniform sky and feel the slow rise of the truck over the levee. I could sit up and see the site receding, but there is no need to look. The time between turns is the only measure of where we are.

That night we are all drunk, but Ray is ahead of us still. He hands me another, and it goes into me like nothing at all. I am past the point of feeling it and suddenly announce, "I am inebriated!" and there is sympathetic laughter.

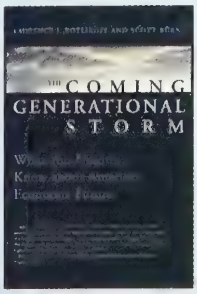
I glance over to Ray, sitting alone on the couch, holding his beer in both hands and staring at it. I sit down next to him. He doesn't react. I reach over and tap his bottle with mine. A toast. At that small tap of glass upon glass, Ray reaches over and grips my arm, hard. He stares into my open eyes. When his words finally come, he speaks them in a heavy, drunken whisper.

"I want my boys to be just like you."

"Just like my boy?" This me, drunk, wondering.

"No. You like me. No. Me like them. Them like you." ■

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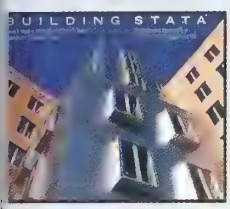



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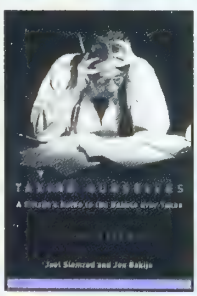


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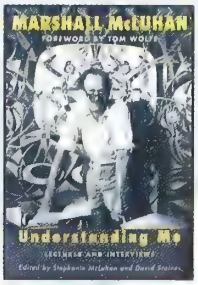
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eins, zwei, drei
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jeden, dwa, trzy
एक, दो, तीन
moja, mbili, tatu
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# BEYOND FALLUJAH

## A year with the Iraqi resistance

*By Patrick Graham*

Early one morning in April, a Monday, an Iraqi doctor and I piled medicine for the Fallujah hospital into the back of his car. I had dyed my hair black, and a friend had made me a fake Iraqi I.D. By then, various groups around the country were holding dozens of foreign hostages; driving out of Baghdad was like slipping into a shark tank. Ahead of us on the road were convoys of trucks, carrying aid and probably weapons. Men from all the Sunni areas, I was told, were coming to Fallujah to fight, a situation that one U.S. Marine had called the Sunni "Super Bowl."



A BOMBED MOSQUE, FALLUJAH

Inside the city itself, the resistance had set up checkpoints every 100 feet. At the tenth checkpoint we were stopped and interrogated. A gun was put to the head of the doctor's uncle, who had accompanied us. We had planned for this eventuality: I was to pretend to be the doctor's mentally ill brother. For this reason I was wearing a suit. I muttered my Iraqi name to the guard. They took us to a mosque at the edge of the industrial zone, where the fighting had been the heaviest. Occasionally a bullet pinged into the asphalt. "Snipers," said the guard.

In the courtyard of the mosque, armed gunmen stood around boxes of medicine. We were taken to an inner room, where a man in the white robes of a conservative Muslim cleric quizzed me. I mumbled in a way that sounded, I hoped, like the product of some sort of brain aneurysm. Upstairs in the mosque, I learned later, the resistance was holding sixteen foreign hostages. We left with a note from the imam of the mosque that asked resistance fighters to let us pass. The guards were very concerned about my health, and were angry at the doctor for having brought his sick brother to such a dangerous place.

Fallujah, which sits along the Euphrates River, is a drab market town, filled with two-story apartment buildings and walled houses the color of a dust storm. Most of the streets are lined with low buildings; piles of old tires and pieces of cars sit in front of small shops. As we drove through the nearly empty streets, hundreds of fighters stood around in small groups. For a while, we followed an ambulance with a single bullet hole in its back window: a clean shot at the driver. Most families had left the city, our escort told us. We heard tanks firing, the low buzz of a circling drone, and the repetitive thud of heavy machine-gun fire. Jet fighters dropped the occasional missile. This was supposedly a cease-fire. The hospital reported that more than 600 people had already been killed, and the Marines had

*Patrick Graham, a Canadian freelance journalist, covered the Iraq war for the London* Observer *and other publications. Previously he was a foreign reporter for the* National Post.

Photograph © Reuters/CORBIS

Western press often had described the insurgents as supporters of Saddam, so the former dictator was clearly irrelevant. There were probably foreign fighters there, too, but in such small numbers as [illegible] insignificant. The fighters were connected to one another by clan; their only political representation was the Association of Muslim Clerics, a Sunni party that had been formed during the summer. This was a tribal uprising, controlled by religious leaders.

IT BECAME CLEAR, FROM THE TALK OF THE MEN WHO DROPPED BY THE [illegible] THAT MANY IN THE VILLAGE SUPPORTED THE ATTACKS

As we left the city, a family in a car ahead of us was killed by tank fire. At the resistance lines, cars were driving like mad back into the city, honking. From open windows, passengers screamed that the American tanks were approaching. A young fighter with a Kalashnikov yelled, in reply, "*Ahlan bik*"—welcome.

I first visited the tribes of the Sunni Triangle at the end of March 2003, just days before the Marines rolled into Baghdad. When a family I had met before the war offered to smuggle me out to the countryside, it seemed worth the risk. It would be a break, at least, from the guided tours of hospitals and bombed telephone exchanges and from the paranoid boarding-school atmosphere of the Palestine Hotel, where the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret police, patrolled the halls.

A Western-style highway, with its familiar guardrails and blue-and-green signs in English and Arabic, took us out across a rock-filled wasteland of desert. Gray-brown sand blew across the road like dirty snow. Oil fires, burning in long trenches by the side of the highway, sent deep black clouds into the air. No one could figure out the point of this, but it looked dramatic on television, as if a set decorator had been told to make the place look doomed. Iraqi soldiers wearing old green coats hid with their tanks under overpasses or camped out in the tree-lined median pitted with foxholes, in a vain attempt to survive the nightly laser-guided Armageddon

After 50 kilometers, a dozen minarets appeared as the highway merged with the main boulevard of Fallujah. We crossed the river and drove west, along the southern boundary of the Sunni Triangle—an isosceles-shaped area covering, roughly, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers up from Baghdad, on the southern apex, to Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit in the north and to Ramadi in the west. As we drove west out of Fallujah, the highway separated two landscapes. On our left, past sand stone bluffs, the western desert stretched 400 kilometers to the Jordanian border. On our right muddy irrigated farmland, flat as a billiard table ended sharply at groves of date palms and eucalyptus. Obscured behind the trees, the Euphrates River wends south from its headwaters in Turkey, through Syria, and, finally, links up with the Tigris River in southern Iraq, where, according to the guidebooks, Adam took the apple from Eve. We drove through a few small dusty towns like Khaldiyah, where merchants and hustlers denied their Bedouin past and threw up square, pillared stone houses with ornate facades. The more cosmopolitan among them added a pagoda or a Crusader castle's keep to the roof. One saw the same style in Baghdad, a nouveau riche school of architecture I came to call Baath Party Babylonian.

Turning off the highway toward the river, we traveled past long, narrow fields and green-domed mosques, as bored boys sat on the embankments watching their sheep graze. At a checkpoint militiamen in head scarves recognized our driver and waved us through. Two women in bright dresses, their faces wrapped in scarves, carried shovels as they led a cow down a dirt track. The village itself was hidden under a spiked canopy of date palms, their rough trunks curving upward between the houses, which were separated by gardens and cinder-block walls or dried, brown palm frond fences. We parked in the grass courtyard of a walled house. Our host, the village Sheikh, greeted us and led us into the *diwan*, the long traditional living room, where men sat on cushions along the walls eating smoked river carp, *mazgouf*, from large platters. It was my first experience of male Iraqi tribal life, with its formal elegance. In Baghdad the dress code before the war had been suits; even the Mukhabarat had showed up for work in Syrian-made Italian knockoffs. Here, the men wore impossibly white, nightshirtlike *dishadashas*, with *imameh*—gauzy white head scarves—or the red-and-white houndstooth kaffiyeh. Every man had a mustache, and most had prominent, well-fed bellies that hung over their crossed legs.

The women disappeared, and the young boy of the family became the household servant. They carried in immense, round aluminum trays of food and laid it on long plastic sheets, which they had rolled out across the floor beforehand like tablecloths in a Chinese restaurant. After the meal they rolled up the sheets, carried out the plates, and returned with strong, dark tea in slender tulip-shaped glasses. With each new arrival the men stood, as the newcomer went around the room shaking hands. When the men sat down there was another greeting—*Allah bil Khew*. God in goodness—said with the right arm slightly

ised and a forward motion of the body, as if ıe were about to stand.

After dinner, packs of stray dogs began bark- g in distress. Soon we, too, heard the B-52 ›mbers, a rumbling so deep they could have en slowly opening an abyss in the night sky. We ent out onto the road and watched the flashes er the Habbiniya air base, which were followed the thunder of missiles. Behind us, the windows of the house shook and the door blew open.

I returned to the village that May, when Bagh- d was in chaos. As I drove out along the high- ay, the entire city seemed to be leaving with me. ucks carried stacks of rebar that dragged along e road; air conditioners and toilets were tied to e tops of old Volkswagen Passat taxis. By the les of roads, families sold rice and sugar looted ›m government storerooms, along with Iraqi ıtional soccer uniforms stolen from Uday's lympic Committee. This was what became ıown in Iraq as *Hawasim*, a word that means "fi- il" or "ending." Saddam had called this war the *arb Al Hawasim*, the Final War, and Iraqis im- ediately renamed looted goods in Iraq *Hawasim*.

The countryside was calm, as if there had nev- been a war at all. We spent our afternoons th the village boys swimming in the Euphrates, ifting past the reeds in the strong current and alking back up the mud bank. When Kael, the ıotographer I worked with during the war, put ı a blue *dishadasha* and waded in, village boys owded the opposite bank yelling, almost riot- g, and inviting us for a dinner. They thought she ıd I were American soldiers, and they loved e spectacle. Later, the Sheikh, who is in his late enties, looked at me sternly and said: "Never › that again." It seemed that I had broken some ıcient tribal code. And then he added: "Unless ım there." He hated to miss seeing a woman imming in the Tigris. It was an idyllic visit, dur- g which there seemed to be a palpable sense of lief, if not of liberation.

This sense did not last long. By the time I re- rned in mid-August, the resistance in the area as attacking every few days. It became clear, ›m the talk of the men who dropped by the ›use at night, that many in the village sup- ›rted the attacks. This is not what I had been ading in the newspapers outside Iraq, where e resistance had been characterized as an un- ›pular and isolated gang of criminals, remnants the Baath regime, and foreign Islamic fighters. I asked the Sheikh whether he knew any of the surgents. Maybe, he said. A few evenings lat- the boys of the house carried white plastic ıairs onto the grass in the courtyard, and we t under the date palms, the yellow fruit hang- g in clusters from the base of the branches.

Mohammed and Abu Ali arrived and greeted the Sheikh and a few others. They were offered glasses of water, which they drained in one gulp, a Bedouin custom that makes sense once one has felt the desert heat. Then came the glasses of hot, sweet tea, one after another, like rounds in an Irish pub. I did not remember the two men from our dinner during the war, but they remembered me. Mohammed, his face shining in the heat, was dressed in a checkered shirt, running shoes, and paint-stained khakis, and his kaffiyeh was casually wrapped in a loose turban—the Iraqi version of wearing one's baseball cap backwards. He is in his late thirties and has a beard. One can tell much about Iraqi men by their facial hair. Mustaches are almost universal and are untouchable, a locus of honor like a woman's virginity; if you want to insult an Iraqi, threaten his mustache. Mohammed's beard was shorter than the full beard of the strictly religious. It seemed to be something of a compromise.



BOYS SWIM IN THE EUPHRATES

It was clear that everyone liked Mohammed. (Unlike Abu Ali, whose name means "father of Ali" and is quite common in Iraq, Mohammed's real name is somewhat distinctive, and so he insisted I refer to him by this pseudonym.) He was treated with a warmth and respect different from that accorded the other guests. Married but childless, he was a kid magnet. Almost as soon as he sat down, the Sheikh's eleven-year-old brother climbed up on Mohammed's lap and stayed there most of the evening. Mohammed's English is awkward but articulate. It was his favorite class at school, he said, because "it gave me a wide view of the world." Despite his reputation in the village for piety, he was curious rather than self-righteous. He followed almost every statement with the expression "Isn't that right?" a translation of the Arabic word *mouhichi*, as in: "Bush said

›tograph © Kael Alford/Panos Picture

After the looting of Baghdad, Mohammed had [illegible] in helping Iraqis. He believed that the reconstruction of Iraq should benefit Iraqis from the frozen accounts and oil revenues of Iraqis. In May he and a dozen others had gotten together and sworn allegiance to God and Iraq. They told me that six people in the immediate area had been killed fighting the Americans, all [illegible] by a nearby base.

"The freedom of this country is now a civilian responsibility," Mohammed said. "In this region, each one protects his own house."

Abu Ali was a soldier, in his mid-forties, and wore a *dishadasha*. He was friendly but wary, sizing me up. At first, I didn't realize that he and Mohammed were in the resistance. I had expected to be taken to some undisclosed location where paranoid men, their faces hidden behind scarves, would deliver a ten-minute rant against Zionism and the infidels before driving off in Toyota pickups. I didn't anticipate the endless glasses of tea, or Mohammed, with a child sleeping on his lap,



telling me that he didn't think Osama bin Laden was a good Muslim.

Later, I asked the Sheikh how I was supposed to believe that Mohammed was in the resistance. Of course, it would have been stupid for Mohammed to say he was in the resistance if he wasn't. A raid meant the possibility of someone in one's family being killed, followed by months [illegible] in a makeshift prison, perhaps [illegible] former tennis courts. But U.S. military intelligence had experienced enormous difficulty recruiting informers after the war, despite having offered $2,500, almost a year's salary in a country with no employment. It did seem strange that a freelance journalist would happen across the resistance in someone's garden.

It was a matter of trust, the Sheikh explained. They were family and neighbors, and in this small-village world people knew what was happening even if they didn't talk about it. The Sheikh was vouching for me, and he was also vouching for Mohammed.

"Two or three times Mohammed came to see me after an operation. I didn't ask the details, but the next day I heard about what happened in the operation from others," the Sheikh said later. "A friend of Mohammed's in the resistance was very angry that he was talking to you, but Mohammed doesn't care. They were worried that U.S. Mukhabarat"—intelligence—"would pressure you. Mohammed is taking a big risk, but he trusts you. And I am taking responsibility, too."

And then he quoted an Arabic expression that went something like this: Either I live and make my friends feel happy, or I die and make my enemies feel bad.

A few weeks after I met Mohammed, I moved into an apartment in Ramadi. Bombs exploded almost every day, and the U.S. troops were tense. Early one morning, after a loud explosion, I rushed to a road that the soldiers call "ambush alley." A Humvee had just been destroyed there by an improvised explosive device, or IED. One of the soldiers threatened to shoot us if we came any closer. I interviewed a man who had been held on the road and only just released by the American soldiers. When I met Mohammed a few days later, he knew all about my visit and said that I had inadvertently interviewed the man who had set the bomb as had the American soldiers.

The occupation hadn't gone well in Fallujah almost from the beginning. Eighteen people were killed in late April while demonstrating against the U.S. presence. The 82nd Airborne, a hard-core combat unit, has made several tours of duty in the area, and once the resistance started they hit back hard. When the 82nd returned to Fallujah in September, there was another spike in the number of civilian dead. According to the main hospital, at least forty civilians and police were killed and sixty to seventy wounded in the area around Fallujah during the first six months of the occupation. (Although the U.S. Army, as an occupying force, is legally responsible for the civilian population, it has declined to release the numbers of Iraqis it has killed, making those statistics open to dispute.) During one week in September a fourteen-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl were killed, and at least four children were sent to the hospital with bullet or shrapnel wounds.

Mohammed's reasons for joining the resistance were mixed. It was partly because of the civilian



Photograph © Jad Al-Tahir/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

ing killed, partly because he believed that the ɔran required Muslims to fight non-Muslim oc- piers. He worried that the Americans would ınd power over to the Shia majority, who had ffered far more under the last regime than had e Sunnis and who would, he feared, take re- nge. He said that like most "good Muslims" he ıted Saddam, but he doubted that the United ates had come to liberate Iraq. It had been a ·ategic war, he thought, designed to threaten ria and Iran and to protect Israel. In the end, his ɔposition had much to do with the simple idea occupation: he just didn't like seeing foreign sol- ers on his land. He was a bit of a Texan that way. He said things like: "When we see the U.S. ldiers in our cities with guns, it is a challenge to . America wants to show its power, to be a cow- ɔy.... Bush wants to win the next election—that why he is lying to the American people saying at the resistance is Al Qaeda.... I don't know lot about political relations in the world, but if ɔu look at history—Vietnam, Iraq itself, Egypt, ıd Algeria—countries always rebel against oc- ıpation.... The world must know that this is an ɔnorable resistance and has nothing to do with e old regime. Even if Saddam Hussein dies we ll continue to fight to throw out the American rces. We take our power from our history, not ɒm one person."

But often he'd tell me to put away my note- ɔok, and then would ask how much did it cost live in Canada, how much were hotels and staurants. He and his wife had problems con- ·iving a child—how much were operations?

That first night, as we talked under the palm ees, explosions could be heard nearby: mortars nding on American bases.

"Would you like to go with us tonight?" he ked. "You are not afraid, isn't that right?"

Mohammed's group was preparing to blow up train full of military equipment, and was wait- g for the signal from an informer who worked ith the Americans. As it turned out, the signal ɔuldn't come for another ten weeks, and I caught ıe aftermath on CNN. Crowds of men and boys ere laughing and cheering and grabbing every- ıing they could. It looked like a classic *ghazu*, the id for booty that tribes have carried out on the rabian peninsula since pre-Islamic times. Even awrence of Arabia led attacks like these—against ıe Turkish railway lines that ran across this desert during the First World War—but he didn't get so many computers.

A minority in Iraq, the Sunni Islamic sect as controlled the country for centuries: from ıe time of the Ottoman Empire, through the ritish conquest during the First World War, ırough the monarchy, right up to and including ıddam. Unlike the Shia majority in the south, many of the Sunni were none too keen on being "liberated," especially those in the tribal areas west of Baghdad. The Sunni tend to view the Shia in much the way that Protestants view Catholics in Ireland—as a deceitful people controlled by their religious leaders, who in turn are part of a papal-like conspiracy run from Iran. They call the Shia *Shrugi*, from the Arabic word for "Eastern"—a derogative term similar to the Serbs' epithet *Shiptar* for the Kosovar Albanians.

MOHAMMED DOUBTED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD COME TO LIBERATE IRAQ. IT HAD BEEN A STRATEGIC WAR, HE THOUGHT

When I interviewed Lieutenant Colonel Alan King, the officer in charge of relations between tribal sheikhs and the U.S. Army—newspaper articles about him have headlines like "Alan of Arabia"—he pointed out that the tribal structure of these areas has for centuries been one way that Iraqis have dealt with foreign invaders. "This area has been occupied since 579 B.C., and the tribes have had to rally among their families and around their tribes in order to survive the various occupations, whether it's the Ottomans, the British, the Greeks, the Mongols, the Persians," Colonel King said. "The tribal system was an important part of that survival. The tribes came up with a tribal law to be able to work among each other through the occupation, so that their family members didn't fall to the occupiers' law."

In the late 1950s, before the Baathists took power, the traditional social structure run by the tribal sheikhs was partially dismantled by land reforms that reduced the sheikhs' wealth and, with it, their authority. Saddam further undermined traditional culture through more land reforms and, at the same time, began a major building program in Ramadi and Fallujah, constructing military bases and airports and hiring locals as small contractors. Money poured into the region. Earth moving and transport are to the tribesmen what construction and garbage removal are to some Italian communities in New York. At the same time, large numbers of the almost entirely Sunni population were being recruited into the army, the Baath Party, and the intelligence services.

When the White House and the U.S. Army needed someone to blame for the postwar failure in Iraq, these Sunnis were quickly labeled Baathists, criminals, and "regime dead enders." Western journalists, ignorant of Iraqi history and for the most part unable to speak Arabic, quickly adopted these simplistic assumptions. But the people of Ramadi and Fallujah had not been part of what was called, before the war, "the royal family"—the residents of Saddam's hometown, Tikrit (or, more specifically, his ancestral village, Al

clearly who had retained almost feudal powers. The rest of the Sunni Triangle was by no means universally pro-Saddam. In fact, a number of the coup attempts against Saddam are believed to have originated here, because its natives held such prominence in the army.

There is a contradiction in the way that the people in Fallujah and Ramadi are presented by the U.S. Army and the occupation administration, as well as by the media. On the one hand, all the residents are said to be rabid Saddam supporters—a characterization that justifies pretty much any action against them, including killing their families. On the other hand, the resistance is said to be supported by only a handful of people. This inconsistency has not been so visible from a distance, in part because most of the public statements in Iraq have been issued with the American, not the Iraqi, public in mind.

THE RESISTANCE GROUPS WORKED IN EACH OTHER'S NEIGHBORHOODS, NOT THEIR OWN, IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEIR FAMILIES

On the ground, though, these mistaken assumptions have led to catastrophic missteps. All the civilian deaths would have caused a population anywhere to react: on Bloody Sunday in 1972, for example, only thirteen Irish Catholics were killed by British troops, but the incident set off decades of fighting. In the Sunni Triangle, an honor-based tribal society where revenge killings are integral to the culture, the cycle, once started, was almost impossible to stop. And it was only when the occupation was presented as a binary choice—you are either with us or against us—that the Sunni circled the wagons.

Mohammed and Abu Ali dropped by the Sheikh's one day, and we sat and talked at the far end of the *diwan*. Abu Ali was carrying photocopied maps of the Habbaniya air base that, he said, would be used to position mortar attacks. A girl pushed a small child into the room and disappeared. The child crawled toward Mohammed.

Mohammed took out a pen and drew, in my notebook, a map of the highways around Ramadi and Fallujah. He marked Xs at various places, perhaps fifteen of them, where he had participated in "operations," but then he scratched out his drawing. He was worried, he said, that I would be captured, tortured, and forced to give up his group.

One operation had stuck in his mind, though—the one in which they had been helped by an angel, just like in a battle mentioned in the Koran, when the Prophet Mohammed and 300 fighters had beaten a thousand of their enemy. Trained, like Abu Ali, as an engineer, Mohammed had wired together two 48-kilogram artillery shells looted from an ammunition dump.

"We placed the shells twenty meters apart, and when two Humvees drove by we blew up both of them," he told me. "When the Americans came to take them away, we hid for half an hour. But we did not notice their soldiers disappearing into the grass. When we packed up our weapons and climbed out of the ditch, the Americans started shooting at us. But we escaped, and only one was a little wounded."

Only an angel could have saved them, he said. This had been during the summer, a few months after they had started their group. They were professionals and tradesmen, Mohammed said, who had been trained by former Iraqi army officers. The cell was primarily made up of men from Mohammed and Abu Ali's own tribe, the Duleimi, who dominate Ramadi and Fallujah.

"The Sunni Triangle is made up of large clans," Mohammed explained as, in the background, an Arabic channel played a documentary on Henry Kissinger and the Vietnam War. "Everybody in a clan knows everybody else. I only trust the people I know very well. If someone comes from another tribe, I don't trust him until I get to know him."

By July their group had contacted two or three others in the area, and one of their members stayed in touch with more cells in the north and the south of the country. As time went on, the groups made closer and closer connections. They worked in each other's neighborhoods, not their own, in order to protect their families.

The resistance was like a root fire, burning invisibly underground, waiting to explode. Village-based partisans were only one species of fighter; others included foreign jihadis, supporters of Saddam Hussein, unemployed army and secret-service personnel, and the specially trained suicide fighters of the Saddam Fedayeen, who had done most of the fighting during the war. As time went on, these underground elements linked up, their tangle of motives united under the banner: "The enemy of my enemy is my friend."

One afternoon in the fall, Mohammed drove me up to a sandstone bluff overlooking the highway at the edge of the western desert, a badlands of rock and wind-sculpted hard sand. Simple stone markers stuck out of mounds in the nearby hilltop cemetery. Cement tombs of those killed in the Iran-Iraq war were painted in the green, black, white, and red of the Iraqi flag, but the colors had faded under the intense sun. His younger brother, who had died in a car crash the year before, was buried there.

"He was very intelligent," Mohammed said, looking at the graves. "He was a beautiful man."

As we walked to the edge of the bluff over

oking the road, two Black Hawks flew low over
e palm groves that rose above the farmland,
oasis stretching out from the meandering Eu-
rates River. It didn't look like Iraq was supposed
—it looked more like Southeast Asia, like one
the scenes Francis Ford Coppola put back in-
*Apocalypse Now Redux*. From the cover of
ese date groves, Mohammed and his group were
anning to shoot down helicopters.

"If I were doing an attack," he said, pointing at
e Black Hawks, which now droned over the
ghway, "I would hit the second one."

Mohammed's group had stockpiled Russian-
ade SAM-7 Strela anti-aircraft missiles, which
d come from the Habbaniya air base a few kilo-
eters down the bluffs. We could see a tank there,
rked under a guard tower. Before U.S. forces
ok over Habbaniya, they had watched as Mo-
mmed and other Iraqis looted the ammunition.

"The Americans are so stupid—they almost
ve us the weapons," he said. "They thought
were thieves. They watched us taking RPGs
ocket-propelled grenades] and other weapons
d said, 'Are you Ali Baba?'" This was what the
I.'s called thieves and looters. "We said yes, so
ey let us in. They thought we were destroying
e Iraqi army."

Hundreds of ammunition dumps around the
untry are still unguarded, providing the resis-
nce with decades' worth of supplies, mostly old
illery shells. Iraq is a virtual Wal-Mart for So-
et munitions and explosives. If resistance fight-
s run out of Strelas they can, according to Mo-
mmed, buy more on the black market for $325
m the tribes in the south. Nor is there any
ortage of funding. A wealthy Sunni in Baghdad
ld me that some of the groups are being fund-
by businessmen he knew. They are outraged by
e new foreign-investment laws, which allow
eign companies to buy up factories for very lit-
. Their revenues have collapsed, because the
untry has been flooded with foreign goods, and
e increased wages now paid to the public sector
agitating their own, poorly paid workers. The
olence, these businessmen realize, is their only
mpetitive edge. It is simple business logic: the
ore problems there are in Iraq, the harder it is
outsiders to get involved.

Mohammed pointed out another base, a former
itish military airport built in the 1920s. It, too,
s a target. Beside the base were the houses of
illage still known as Coolie Camp, built for In-
an workers brought in by the British. From
ere we stood, he counted five targets that the
istance was planning to attack.

"Did you see *Braveheart*?" he asked me. "They
row out the British and the corrupt nobles. It
about hope. The people in the movie want
edom, and so do we. In the movie, the prob-
ns start because the British invaded and take
the beautiful women and hurt the people. Because of the hard times, they gather weapons and get rid of the spies and traitors, isn't that right?"

Mel Gibson's movie had struck a chord with Mohammed on a number of levels. Not only did his own grandfather fight against the British but, like the Scottish nobles in *Braveheart*, many of the area's important sheikhs worked with the British occupiers. (The same families, Mohammed said, were now working with the Americans.) Mohammed referred to Western culture and history as frequently as he did to the Koran. At times he sounded like a seventies European student radical, someone who might have joined the Red Brigade.

"We think of Vietnam and look at the modern history of the United States, which is not very good," he said. "Why do they call us the Third World? Why do they look down on us?... Justice is the basis of ruling, and Saddam forgot this. We expect the fall of the American empire, because they do not follow justice in the world."



CEMETERY, FALLUJAH

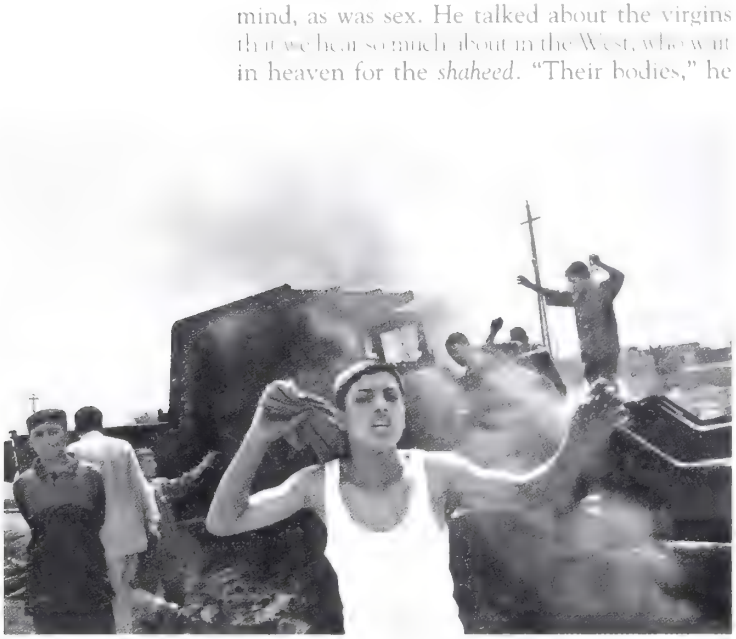
Until American soldiers stopped interacting with Iraqis on the streets of Fallujah and Ramadi, Mohammed would stop and talk to them. In part, he did this to check out their weapons, but he was curious too. One soldier showed him a picture of his family and said: "I miss them so much. I want to leave your country right now, but my government won't let me." Once, to a black soldier guarding a tank, he said, "Hey, Negro." After the man became angry, Mohammed explained to him that it was what he thought white men called blacks in the movies.

"I wanted him to feel that it was not his fault—it is the white man," Mohammed told me. "I wanted him to think about his African roots."

The intense heat lasted into the fall. One

tograph © Kael Alford/Panos Pictures

night, after Mohammed invited me to sleep at his house. He dragged some cots into his garden, where it was somewhat cooler. Occasionally a helicopter flew overhead, and mortars could be heard landing on the bases. Death was on his mind, as was sex. He talked about the virgins that we hear so much about in the West, who wait in heaven for the *shaheed*. "Their bodies," he said, "are made of light." He went on to detail a complicated Armageddon in which Christians, Jews, and Muslims unite to fight an enemy but wind up fighting among themselves. It would happen in 2023 and would end with the bodies of good people rising to heaven. The more he talked, the more he seemed like someone who might be invited to give a prayer breakfast at the White House, where he could have delivered a sermon against gay marriage.



AFTER AN ATTACK, RAMADI

Mohammed said he was looking for a second wife but that this was proving difficult.

"A man needs sex, isn't that right," he said. A dog barked in the distance. "That's a fox."

Conversations about sex in the *diwan* often resemble dialogue from *Sex in the City*. The men want details, a lot more than I wanted to volunteer. In Iraq sex has not been processed, as it has been in the West, by television and pop psychology. It remains a mysterious, dark continent, and travelers share their stories as much for information as for pleasure. In Ramadi and Fallujah, where talking to a fellow female university student can end in marriage, Western sex lives seem like stories Captain Cook brought back from the South Seas. "You look like a clever boy," the Sheikh said shortly after we met. "What age did you lose your virginity?" Another man in the *diwan* asked me, "When you are with a woman, do you have anal sex?" and then launched into a description of the anal sex he'd had with his doctor's secretary that very afternoon. Preserving an unmarried woman's virginity is a priority, and so young partners often will rub their genitals together but avoid penetration. They call it "brushing," or "scratching."

A woman's virginity is a family possession, guarded like a bank vault. In Ramadi and Fallujah brothers and male cousins traditionally do not attend a woman's wedding, because it is too humiliating to see her literally possessed by another man. To men with such an ethos, Western sexual practices often seem bizarre or hypocritical rather than enviable. The Sheikh once asked me, "If you don't care if a woman has sex with another man before you marry her, why do you care if she does it after you marry her?"

The only topic of conversation more popular than sex is God. Once, while the men in the *diwan* were asking me about "friendships" in the West, we were interrupted by the local imam who was arriving for dinner, the usual roast chicken and pickles. Young and eunuchlike, the imam reminded me of a country parson, which, in a way, he was. After the young men had carried away the long plastic floor covering and the food he sat on the floor. Did Islam truly demand resistance to the occupiers? I asked him. He confirmed that it did, and then invited me to become a Muslim. His own sales pitch was soon drowned out by those of the other men, whose enthusiasm for the Koran was overwhelming. I will convince you there is a God, exclaimed the Sheikh, or you will convince me he does not exist, or we will not sleep. Later, the imam brought me a photocopied pamphlet entitled "General Information on Islam," as well as "How I Came to Islam," an article by Cat Stevens.

In a deeply religious country, the Duleimi are particularly so. During the massive military building programs of the 1980s, minarets sprang up everywhere in the region, I was told, as residents longed "to atone for their sins of working with the regime." After a few visits, I came to think of the area as the Koran Belt. The Duleimi have a reputation for being tough, simple country folk, and Duleimis themselves will often say, proudly, that they are a bit crazy. I worked with a young Duleimi translator from Baghdad, and whenever he acted aggressively without thinking, our Shia driver would turn to me, mouth the word "Duleimi," and giggle. He might as well have been saying "hillbilly."

In Baghdad they tell jokes about the Duleimi that remind me of Polish jokes I heard as a kid. Here's one: An American soldier and a newly trained Duleimi policeman are out on patrol one night. "The curfew starts at eleven o'clock," the soldier explains. "Hold your fire till then, but after that it's open season." A man walks by at 10:15, and the Duleimi shoots him dead. The



Photograph © Kate Allord/Panos Pictures

oldier turns on him, stunned. The Duleimi says, proudly: "I know that guy—it'll take an hour for him to get home."

In late September, I met Abu Ali in a crowd of men near a burning transport truck. Hampered by a flat tire, the truck had been abandoned to the locals, who had thrown a grenade into the cab and then torched it. Abu Ali was carrying a video camera, which he had been using to film an "operation" on the highway from behind some trees. That night, he told us about an eight-hour firefight that had recently taken place in an area called Al Jazeera, or "The Island." He offered to take us to see what had happened. The next morning we found the area still sealed by American tanks, but when we came back a few hours later the Army had vanished. At a bend in the narrow road, thick bushes, fruit trees, and tall grasses blocked a view of date-palm groves a few hundred yards away.

"This place is very good for attacks," said Abu Ali. It was something of an understatement. The place made one think: ambush. It was the guerrilla equivalent of a hunting blind. "Groups come from all over to make operations here."

Five large holes perforated the dirt at the edge of the asphalt. Wires from burnt tires spooled off the road from patches of black dust. Abu Ali walked over to some newly covered holes. In the past few weeks, he said, there had been three "operations" here. Only later were we told that new IEDs had already been reburied in the holes, waiting the next patrol.

We drove back up the road to a large compound, where three houses were set back a few hundred yards from the road. During the last attack at the bend in the road, four IEDs had exploded and RPGs had been fired at a convoy. Near one of the houses a firefight had broken out between soldiers and the resistance. Where the palm trees had been grazed by bullets, small tufts of reddish bark hair poured out of the knobby trunks. A tank shell had knocked through a balcony, taken out part of a doorframe, and then destroyed the entire wall behind. Heavy-caliber bulletholes arced across the walls that faced the road. At our feet, a telephone cable had been cut, its bright red and white wires lying unsheathed in the dirt.

Abu Ali warned us the family was angry, and joked that I might need him for protection. Two men in the family had been arrested and were being held in Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad. A crowd of men came out of the house wearing white *dishadashas* and looked at us, unimpressed. They were wealthy farmers who owned large fields of richly irrigated land, and they were very pissed off.

"Journalists come here, write their stories, and then go back to Baghdad and drink," said one of the farmers, quite accurately. "Before and now, we hate Americans. And then they do this and we hate them more. Do you know any Iraqis who like the Americans?" I said I did.

"They are faggots," he said in Arabic as we walked through the dust to look at a crater in a field. "In the Arabic tradition, when they do this to your house, you take ten of their women."

The Army had been back that morning searching for weapons, he said. The soldiers had been polite but had not offered any compensation. As we got in the car to leave, the men offered to show us a video of "operations" in the area. On the way back to the village, I asked Abu Ali if he thought the resistance could beat the Americans.

"We don't know what the result of this will be," he said.

Mohammed had told me that Ramadan, the traditional month-long fast commemorating the revelation of the Koran, would be a bad month. It turned out to be the worst month since the invasion. In Fallujah alone during the first two weeks of November, nearly twenty U.S. soldiers were killed, most of them when a Chinook was shot down with a Strela south of the city. F-16s dropped 500-pound bombs in the area for the first time since the end of the war. During the fall, attacks on U.S. soldiers had climbed steadily in Al Anbar province, which stretches west from Fallujah to the Jordanian and Syrian borders, at one point reaching roughly fifty per day. In mid-November the Army tried to engage the insurgents, in an aggressive campaign it called Iron Hammer.

THE PLACE AT THE BEND IN THE ROAD MADE ONE THINK: AMBUSH. IT WAS THE GUERRILLA EQUIVALENT OF A HUNTING BLIND

I spent the first day of Ramadan with Mohammed. We shopped for refrigerators for his dead brother's family in Ramadi, settling on a cheap Iranian model made by a company called General Steel. By the afternoon the calorie deficit had made us dozy, and we lounged around his unfinished *diwan*. The walls were unpainted, and wires hung out where sockets should have been. I passed out for a while and awoke to find him translating pages from what looked like a military magazine, outlining the specs of Black Hawk and Apache helicopters. He had his dictionary out.

"What is boron?" he wanted to know. It wasn't in the dictionary, and I didn't have a clue. This was not something I wanted to get involved in, and I told him so. He passed me the pages on the Hughes AH-64 Apache, with Arabic scribbled in the margin.

"Easily the most expensive helicopter ever

does not extend to protection against missiles [illegible] The helicopter was set to come into production in December 1983, which made the magazine more than twenty years old. The boron seemed to have something to do with the canopy.

"[illegible]" he asked.

We sat outside in the failing light waiting for *iftar*, the meal that ends the fast, which usually consists of chicken soup and a cardamom-flavored custard. Mohammed's mother, dressed in black with circular blue tattoos on her face and hands, approached us. She said something in a deep, raspy, Marlene Dietrich–like voice. Mohammed called her Hajia, a common term of respect for older women.

ABU ALI SAID THAT IF THE U.N. CAME THE RESISTANCE WOULD STOP, "BECAUSE THEY WILL GIVE A DATE WHEN THEY WILL LEAVE"

"My mother says that she just wants a cigarette and a glass of cold water."

After the meal, we sat outside again on the benches as neighbors dropped by. Most of the talk was about the contracts to rebuild Iraq, and about a helicopter that had been shot down with an RPG the day before in Tikrit. Abu Ali said he thought that if the U.N. came to Iraq the resistance would stop, "because they will give a date when they will leave." Before he went to bed, Abu Ali told me that some kind of "operation" would happen the next day. He didn't say where.

The next morning, as I was getting ready to return to Baghdad, there was an explosion in the distance. The highway was blocked by hundreds of cars. I stood in the crowd and watched two Medevac helicopters land and take off again, filling the air with dust. In the distance, what looked like a Humvee was surrounded by soldiers. Two soldiers walked into the crowd, pointing their guns at a car.

"Get the fuck out of the car. Now! I don't care if you're the fucking president."

They let an ambulance through and then restored some order. "Hey Johnson, no more ambulances," one of the soldiers said. He turned to the Iraqis. "You might as well turn off your cars. No one is going anywhere."

The soldiers didn't have a translator with them. No one seemed to understand what they said until they pointed their guns. It was like someone yelling in Arabic at commuters in a New York traffic jam. What a strange feeling, I thought, to be on the wrong side of the American Army, which brings too much firepower to almost every situation [illegible] something I had heard from a friend who had gone to work in Hollywood for a while: the production values are incredible but the script sucks.

Men and women watched nervously as the two soldiers went through the line of cars. And then the shooting began: the low, rapid thud of a .50 caliber. The soldiers ran back to the protection of their Humvees. From the top of one of them, a gunner fired bursts at a patch of long grass across the river, 200 yards away. The other Humvee's machine gun opened up, and people began running off the road. Some hid behind a cinder-block wall. Tractor-trailers and cars tried to turn around and drive away. I learned later that an IED had exploded down the road and the soldiers had begun shooting at passing cars.

A man was killed driving in the other direction. The Army said that he had been killed by the bomb. When I came back from Baghdad a few days later, I spoke with people who had been by the side of the road; they were certain it had been the soldiers. The day before, six people had been killed just outside Fallujah the same way. The next week the Chinook was shot down, killing sixteen soldiers headed home for R and R.

It reminded me of something the Sheikh had told me weeks earlier. "We are like a man with a razor in his throat," he had said. "We can't spit out the Americans, but we can't swallow them either."

In November during Eid, a Christmas-like holiday following Ramadan, I dropped by the Sheikh's house. The Sheikh, when I finally tracked him down, kept saying, "*Mushkilah mushkilah*": problem, problem. It was raining, and his *diwan* was cold and damp. The kerosene stove gave off less heat than did the bodies of the local men, who began gathering after dinner for what appeared to be a complicated negotiation. The men in the *diwan* were trying to settle a feud. The electricity was intermittent and much of the time an old lantern lit the men's faces. One local fisherman had murdered another, and the dead man's brother had in turn killed the murderer. After an hour, they settled on 1 million dinars ($600) to be paid to the dead murderer's family. When it was over some men left and the television was turned back on.

We began watching a talk show on Al Jazeera called *The Opposite Direction*. It was hosted by Faisal Al Qassim, who, in his self-important nerdiness, reminded me of CNN's Aaron Brown. One of the guests was Entifadh Qanbar, a spokesman for the formerly exiled leader Ahmad Chalabi, the most pro-American—and arguably least popular, less even than Saddam Hussein—of Iraqi politicians. Qanbar was arguing with another man, Fadil Al Rubaia. The subject of the show was "Do You Support the Resistance?" and

:casionally a phone number appeared on the reen for viewers to call in.

As the show began, Abu Ali came into the *di-an* and sat down beside me. We talked a bit, id he began to write a letter that he said he anted me to give to Al Jazeera. The men in the om were jeering at Qanbar, who came across as ick and a little shifty. Not only was Qanbar de-nding the U.S. occupation; his Arabic, like that many returned exiles, wasn't fluent. When he nfused the word for "roots" with the word for omorrow" there was smug laughter in the *di-an*. Al Rubaia, who was pro-resistance, was bald-g and pompous and reminded me of the typical aath Party apparatchiks who dominated the lives journalists before and during the war. It seemed pical of Iraq that one couldn't trust the man on ther side of the argument.

During the show a graph occasionally flashed ross the screen showing that 90 percent of llers supported the anti-American resistance. his meant (at the time) that mostly Sunni Arabs ere calling in. Mohammed came over and sat wn between Abu Ali and me. He saw Abu li's note and, typically, began to correct the ammar. Arabic is difficult to write, even for ative speakers, and Mohammed can be some-ing of a pedant.

"Do you have your phone?" Mohammed asked. We should call Al Jazeera."

Thuraya satellite telephones are easy to trace, id this area was what newspapers call a "resis-nce stronghold." But it seemed rude to say no, we went outside and Mohammed dialed the umber in Qatar. I could hear something in Ara-c and Mohammed pressed one of the numbers. asked him what Al Jazeera had said.

"The message said, 'Press one if you support the sistance.'"

Later that evening, Abu Ali told me that mething was going to happen the next day. I idn't ask any details, and I doubt he would ave given them. The next morning before I ft, I could hear heavy machine-gun fire, probably American, coming from the adjacent town.

During one of the first warm nights this ring, Abu Ali, the Sheikh, and I sat outside on rpets in the garden. The wind, humid and aro-atic, blew through the eucalyptus trees between e Sheikh's house and the Euphrates River a few undred yards away. In December, Mohammed ad been arrested by American soldiers. After a mb exploded, he had argued with some of the ldiers, and eventually they had thrown him in e back of a Bradley. Apparently they didn't now he was in the resistance; they probably just t sick of his stubborn, anti-American views.

I told Abu Ali that I was relieved Mohammed had been arrested. I had always had the impression that he wanted to become a *shaheed* and kill himself in an anti-American attack. Abu Ali agreed.

"When we attacked the Americans, Mohammed would push himself very hard. He wanted to be a *shaheed*. I would tell him to stand there and go no further." Abu Ali laughed. "Yes, he wanted to be a *shaheed*. I didn't have that problem—maybe because I used to drink beer." He wasn't nearly as strict a Muslim as Mohammed, but he did add: "When they become *shaheed*, it is a beautiful smell and their color stays fresh. And friends see this and they want to die." (This was a common belief, even among doctors at the hospital in Fallujah.)

Abu Ali was relaxed and more friendly than I remembered ever having seen him. He had taken some time off from the resistance to do some contract work for the occupation. He needed some of the money to take care of his son, Ali, but the rest was going to run the resistance group—i.e., the American taxpayer was funding both sides of the conflict. After a few more glasses of tea, the Sheikh said it was time to leave. He, too, was on the run: explosives had been found buried on land he owned, though he swore he had not been involved in any "operations."



*INTERIOR, A VILLAGE OUTSIDE RAMADI*

Before we left, Abu Ali explained that his group had switched tactics. Now it was attacking American bases with rockets and mortars, rather than laying IEDs on the road or firing rocket-propelled grenades. I thought of this a few days later, when I heard that two U.S. Marines had been killed by a rocket attack on a nearby base.

"This is nothing like the 1920s rebellion," Abu Ali said before he left. "It is much bigger."

A few weeks later, almost one year after the war began, I went to a ceremony marking the handover of control for Al Anbar from the 82nd Airborne to the Marine Expeditionary Force. There

otograph © Kael Alford/Panos Pictu

unfurled. The Marines are polite, clean-cut; they

m down."

As General Charles H. Swannack of the 82nd

About six weeks earlier, after a convoy carrying General John Abizaid, the commander of U.S. Central Command, had been attacked in Fallujah, General Swannack was quoted as saying that "[9]5 percent of the people of Fallujah supported the occupation and that the attack represented the views of just a few bad guys. It was a bizarre statement, and he must have known that he was lying. The Marine general, Lieutenant General James T. Conway, seemed to be all that General Swannack was not.

"We think we will see the day when we are playing soccer with them," said General Conway. "But it won't be in a few weeks."

Less than two weeks later, four private security guards were attacked in Fallujah and their burned bodies dragged through the streets.

In April, a few days after the Marines surrounded Fallujah, the Sheikh and his cousins decided to return to the village, and he offered to take me with them. We had made the trip from Baghdad together often. This time the main highway was closed, and so we set off on a roundabout route through the countryside. Two *New York Times* reporters had been briefly kidnapped there the previous day, but I wasn't especially concerned. Near a town called Al Kharma we saw insurgent fighters, head scarves wrapped across their faces, unloading armfuls of RPGs from the trunk of a car. The Sheikh was elated; he honked and yelled blessings.

In the previous few days the villages around Ramadi and Fallujah had been thrown into chaos. The resistance, until then a clandestine force, had suddenly emerged. After months of humiliation, as the Sheikh saw it, Sunni Iraqis finally were striking back. The men with the RPGs stopped and returned his greeting. Behind us a cloud of smoke rose from a roadside bomb, and American planes left slowly expanding contrails in the sky. A few kilometers away helicopter gunships flew over a stand of palms. We crossed a

past a house, beside which was a charred white SUV. Later I would see this house again on television, in a pixelated

the bodies of two young dead West

beside the truck's wheels.

Several wrong turns took us out into the desert through an old Iraqi military base. The Sheikh and his cousins began to worry; they saw that we were being followed. One of them removed his kaffiyeh and put it on my head. It didn't make me look Iraqi at all, but rather like Tintin. We returned to the bridge, where dozens of resistance fighters, most of their faces uncovered, held large Russian machine guns and more RPGs. The cousin took the kaffiyeh off my head.

"Do you want to interview them?" the Sheikh asked. He was very enthusiastic about the idea.

We stopped on the bridge and got out of the car. I pulled out my press I.D., and there was some negotiation. The fighters invited me to come under the bridge. Suddenly a car, the same one that had been following us, crossed onto the bridge and stopped. Men jumped out with guns and surrounded us. We were told to get back into our cars and follow them; they drove us to a checkpoint where some large trucks had been stopped by more than fifty fighters. My I.D. was taken to one of the fighters, as others began to search the car. When they opened the trunk and saw my flak jacket, they began to shout. The Sheikh stood at the car door and yelled, "Duleimi, Duleimi." He listed every important Sheikh he was related to. More men gathered around the car. These men were Al Jumaili, and his tribal relations went only so far with them.

Just as their leader was walking over, a car stopped barely short of hitting us, and the driver yelled for everyone to leave. Americans were attacking the position. After briefly being unable to start our car—a film cliché come unnervingly to life—we drove away at 170 kilometers an hour, past a burning Humvee and another burned-out SUV. As some Marine Humvees approached, we slowed; after they disappeared we veered down a canal. On the far side, another convoy of Americans came down the road. When we looked down our side of the bank, ten resistance fighters were preparing to fire RPGs at them.

An hour later, when we reached the village, the Sheikh and his cousins were nervous. I was no longer a foreign guest but a serious problem. The Sheikh dropped us off at another cousin's house and disappeared, afraid that someone might see him with a Westerner. After a year of visiting the village, everything had suddenly changed. The countryside was now in open rebellion. In nearby Ramadi the resistance had killed twelve Marines in a well-coordinated attack. Men in the village, I was told, had offered to go and fight in Fallujah, but leaders there had told them that they had enough men already.

The next morning I left the village and have not returned since. The Sheikh had been a wonderful host, but I had visited a few too many times.

# THE TURN

## Inside the secret dervish orders of Istanbul

*By Rafi Zabor*

A few nights after my arrival in Istanbul last summer, I took myself to an undisclosable location. I left my shoes at the gate and padded indoors through the simple low-roofed rooms of the *tekke*, nodding to this or that half-familiar face on the way through the tea kitchen, where I dropped off a kilo of peaches I'd brought as a gift to the house. On the white-washed back patio I parked myself under a slender stripling tree at the edge of the little patch of garden and was ignored until eventually someone coming by with a tray bent and doled me out a tulip glass of tea. I sipped and looked around. It was your basic bunch of middle-aged Turkish businessmen with paunches and mustaches sitting on the ground beside the back garden smoking cigarettes, drinking tea, and chatting as the summer evening unpacked its pastels overhead. Gulls coasted through magenta fadeaways, and a scattering of swallows circled down the day's last dole of flies.

There are only a few fully functioning *tekkes*—or dervish lodges—left in Istanbul, some accessible after brief acquaintance with a member met by chance, others impossible to find or enter without deeper scrutiny and specific invitation. All of them are illegal, though some years find the state more tolerant than others. This year they weren't jailing anyone, but my friends told me not to write about the *tekkes*, please. Even or perhaps especially with a crypto-Islamic party in power, it was not that kind of year. For the most part, the elected government was keeping to the secular side of the redline, but it made occasional sallies across the wire, and the army emitted nervous noises in response, with unauthorized generals whispering in public about the possibility of a coup. I told my friends I wouldn't mention any names or give an address, and that seemed to be all right.



The dervish orders, or *tariqats*, are only roughly comparable to the Christian monastic orders. "No monkery in Islam," the Prophet Muhammad is recorded to have said, and in any case a monastic withdrawal from the world would not be in keeping with his religion. The Jesus of Christianity was an uncommonly transcendent figure who did not live a normal sort of life; Muhammad worked, married, and had to deal with the material world as is. Accordingly, the Sufi or dervish ideal is to be "in the world but not of it," to live the life of one's time but to be inwardly free of attachment to its forms and lures. Naturally, there are many ways of achieving this.

There were a couple of other Americans on the patio and around the garden, one an impressively large black guy with cool intelligent eyes and a wealth of sleek black beard. He was wearing an approximately oriental

*Rafi Zabor is the author of the novel* The Bear Comes Home.

Stills from *Decasia*, a film by Bill Morrison. Cinematography by Lloyd Ahlquist and Joe Maggio for the Newsreel

have gotten a Turkish man arrested if he wore it out of doors.

What Atatürk—the modern Turkish nation after the First World War, he literally created—installed was parliamentary democracy where the Sultanate had stood but reconfigured everything from the orthography to the dress code, often with an anticlerical edge. For example, the legislated substitution of the fedora and workman's cap for the fez wasn't only about looking European: the fact is you can't bow your forehead to the mosque carpet if your headgear has a brim. With his Macedonian coloring, tan hair, and famously penetrating ice-blue eyes, the Father of the Turks may not have looked the part, but he didn't miss a trick. He saved the nation from dismemberment by the English, Greeks, and French, then saved it again by preserving it from the region's generic history of despotism, war, and medieval religiosity. Wisely, since only an unshakable leader could have managed so massive a transition of so venerable a culture, Atatürk enjoyed the prerogatives of one-man rule while he lived but created republican institutions that survived his death in 1938. It didn't stop there. Atatürk's laser eyes and restraining hand continued to check the drift of armed ambition from beyond the grave: in the series of military coups beginning in 1960, the Turkish army, after rewriting the constitution and bashing a few heads during an interstitial period of martial law, has always passed the reins of power back to a civilian coachman while retaining a supervisory role for itself in the shotgun seat—a gesture that has saved the republic several times from the regional pastime of dictatorship and civil war. Denmark it's not, but at least it's not Syria or Iran either.

Outlawing the dervish orders in 1925 was a small detail in Atatürk's virtually unerring transformation of Turkish life from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, and although the *tarikat* lost the political power they enjoyed and sometimes misused under the Sultanate, their way of life has gone on. Turkey is at least as chock-full of religious primitives as the Bible Belt. Some of

America. Even in their necessarily subterranean [illegible] the fundamentalist impulse; while secreted within the power structure, sometimes at high levels, their members have persistently labored toward what a liberal Westerner would recognize as enlightened ends.

"Oh yes," I heard the black guy tell [illegible] in a mellow tone. "More and more every year. Between ten and twenty million have taken shahada in America. It's growing all the time."

His pronouncement was gratefully received by those around him. Serious nods: oh yes, the future coming in the form we know it must.

Jesus—did he think, did they think, that what the world needed was more *Muslims*?

The other American on the patio was in his late twenties, a wiry hippie unit with beard and ponytail, wearing an embroidered cap and black cotton pants with a sargasso of black cotton strips fronding from them to no apparent purpose. Pants, cap, and ponytail apart, he reminded me of myself at his age my first time in-country almost thirty years ago, excited eyes drinking the scene in, gestures overeager, maybe a little manic. The dramaturgy of his intake took one other step mine hadn't: he was speaking English in a movie-Turkish accent, with simplified grammar: a generic I-yam-spikking-anozzer-language voice. I had a friend, decades back, who had picked up an accent living as a soul on fire for a couple of years in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, but this kid didn't seem to be living all that rough: his clothes looked clean and pressed, and I didn't see much road dust on his shoulders.

In general, dervishes, or Sufis—although no one calls himself a Sufi: it's too elevated an honorific—have been presented in the West as freewheeling poetical heretical souls well outside the determinations of religion, and sometimes that is so, but from what I've seen in Turkey and elsewhere most congregants do not experience the dervish life as a departure from religion but as a deepening of it; as a greater intimacy with spiritual realities beyond category and name, yes, but not something that necessitates or implies a West[illegible] break with inherited tradition. The *tarikat* I was visiting that night had its origins in a reaffirmation of restrictive orthodoxy within the branching of Turkish Sufi orders in the eighteenth century, but in my experience there was little doctrinal rigidity in the house, always an open door, no end of welcome, and, on an average night, experience beyond sectarian qualification and cognitive limit.

The only visible signs of their specific affiliation were two slight ties in dress: white cotton caps of a slightly different shape from standard-issue prayer hats, and open-front tan vests never worn out there in the world that they'd put on over their street clothes, which themselves were conventional as could be: white oxford cloth polo shirts, gabardine slacks or chinos. A scattering of youngsters apart, they looked like a convocation of uncles an unpracticed eye could have taken for Jewish or Italian.

Unfortunately and atavistically from my perspective, the *tekke*'s women were elsewhere, either working in the kitchen along one side of the garden or sequestered in a room upstairs.

After a longish stretch in which no one seemed to have noticed my presence except the man who had bent to serve me tea, a gentleman sitting near—earth-tone complexion, handsome and graying in a settled, prosperous way, dressed more fashionably than most of his countrymen in a textured gray linen shirt and amply pleated slacks—pivoted toward me on the whitewashed patio surface and engaged me in conversation: a definite choice. He wore no ritual vest or cap, so was a visitor or friend of the house like me. He asked in unstrained English where I was from and what I did for a living, was I married and did I have children, but then the conversation took the first of a few curious turns.

I forget the particular winding through the garden of our talk, though my personal disclaimer of responsibility for the not-quite-election of George W. Bush may have helped ramble us nearer the grove in which we ended. It wasn't long before he wondered if I knew, did I realize . . . "America, you know. W

Turks were in America six thousand years before your people came."

"Excuse me?" I asked, wondering what he meant, exactly, by my people. Turks, especially Istanbul Turks, have lived peacefully alongside Jews for centuries, and know how to spot them. My people had reached America by escaping pogroms in Russia and getting out from under Hitler, and he should have deduced at least some of this. More to the point, I found myself trying to visualize Bronze Age teahouses in Minneapolis. "*. . . six thousand years?*"

"Yes. For one example I'll give you, Iowa is a Turkish name. And Susquehanna, I believe which is the name of one of your rivers . . ."

I nodded yes, it was.

"In Turkish means Quiet Mother."

"Gimme a sec." I worked my small Turkish. Ana: mother. Sus: shuddup. Uncharitably, my translation, granting the connective "que," ran Shuddup, Ma.

"Yes. Research and you will see it, we Turks populated your continent six thousand years before you came."

"I did not know that," I told him, doing a pointless Johnny Carson, wondering what he'd do with Winnipesaukee, Oglala, Nantasket, Kwakiutl.

"Yes, we were in America before you," he said, drawing on his cigarette, "and you took it away from us."

I wondered if he was about to suggest that it was time for me, personally, to give it back, when, "Aah," I said, making the sound of his point dawning upon my intellectual horizon. "Yes, of course, across the Bering ice pack from Siberia and then south, the ancestors of the American Indians . . . but can you really call them *Turkish*?"

It took us a while to get the mental map unfolded and trace the dotted lines of migration, and I had to allow that, yes, the extraordinary voyagers who aboriginally populated the Americas, like the aboriginal Turks, came from the land north of Mongolia and were, like the pre-Islamic Turks, in religious matters shamanistic—which, by the way, helps explain why Turkish Islam is characteristically more open and tolerant than the Arabic and Persian versions: shamanism has no dogma and relies on personal authenticity alone—but even though







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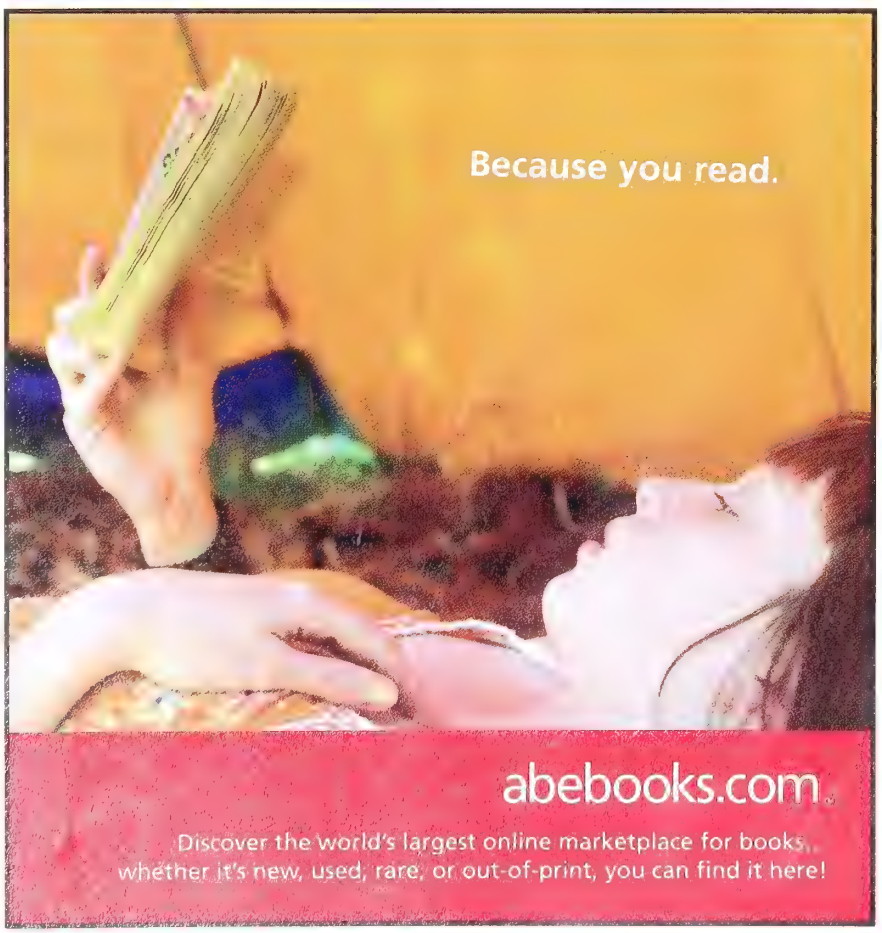
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# WHO'S DRIVING THE HYDROGEN ECONOMY?



## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF GM.

The hydrogen economy isn't a pipe dream. And it isn't the buzz du jour on the front page of the business section. The hydrogen economy is the endgame of a multi-faceted strategy GM set in motion years ago, with steps that are real, progressive, and well-underway.

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the man's control [illegible] creeping unease began to warn me that I might [illegible] the Turks [illegible] bop, the cheeseburger, and Roy Charles. My eyes began scooting side to side in search of an exit, and, aha, found one in the middle of [illegible] prior omissions.

"Oh, yes: and what do *you* do for a living?" I suddenly wanted to know.

My interlocutor recomposed himself. I [illegible]

"For many years I sold shotguns, but now I am retired from that," he said.

He looked fifty-something and could have been younger—most Turks age faster than we do—a little early for retirement. "What kind of shotguns?" I asked him.

"Shotguns of the finest quality, made by hand here in Turkey and sold worldwide. Connoisseurs of shotguns all over the world know that they are among the finest made."

I could smell the ink of his brochure. "And they're made here in Turkey?" I asked hypocritically-politely, still hoping to avoid hearing how the first, best version of the Brooklyn Bridge, when primordial Turks beheld the East River in that bygone dawn, had been lofted stone by sacred stone into place.

"By our craftsmen, yes."

"Of course," I said, and by a rumpled facial expression and an inclination of my head indicated my lifelong respect for Turkish craftsmanship.

"It was a good business, but I don't sell them anymore."

"You're retired."

"Yes. Now I sell RPGs."

"Excuse me?" My mind boggled slightly as I began to pass through the looking glass. The images around me warped and bent but then resumed, coherent.

"Yes. Now I am retired I sell rocket propelled grenades."

"You do?" But to whom exactly? Al Qaeda, resurgent Taliban, some frothing righteous contingent in the new Iraq, any stray bunch of mujahedeen?

"Yes. America has all the big weapons but, you know, the little man needs a means of protecting himself. The little man needs his Stinger, too."

"Uhhh . . ."

"And isn't it good," this well-man[illegible] asked me, "that North [illegible] its nuclear weapons that Mr. Bush must talk to them?"

"[illegible] think Bush is much of a listener, and how much d'you know about North Korea?" I said. "Look, I'm usually first in line when it comes to sticking Dubya in the eye, but doesn't Kim Jong Il strike you as kind of dangerous, maybe a little paranoid?"

My interlocutor reexamined the specimen of spoiled American the drift of circumstance had placed before him. "Mr. Bush will have to talk with them, you see."

"Yeah, maybe he will. But still . . ."

"It is not good if only America has the guns."

"Yes, of course, but even so . . ."

The metaphorical dinner gong—a miscellaneous bustle on all sides, some blurred announcements, the rustle of uncles rising to their feet—spared us both.

"Is it time for . . . ?"

"Yes, I think it is."

"Then let's . . ."

I detached myself more radically than I absolutely needed to, happy to have escaped a possible lecture on the virtues of Osama bin Laden and America's overdue lesson in humility.

Over the years I'd had a few jeez-get-me-outa-here conversations with Islamic or nationalist fanatics of one stripe or another, but never inside dervish walls, where the talk generally ran more tolerant and enlightened. What troubled me most about this man, though, was the thickness of intellectual muscle behind what he permitted himself to say, the granitic solidity of his self-assurance.

I sidestepped a rush to set up a table on the back patio and went inside, where we were served by men who bent to ladle portions of dinner into our bowls at low round tables around which we sat on the floor six or eight to a circle. Each of us had tucked an edge of tablecloth into his lap to catch the crumbs of bread as we spooned down good lamb-and-eggplant stew on rice, followed by a sweet and sticky dessert.

When dessert was done I excused myself to retrieve the light cotton jacket I'd left outside, folded in a corner of the patio, and—"Oh, hello! Come!"—was invited for tea and a second dessert at the *shaikh*'s long table, set out beneath the baby trees.

I was relieved to be seated next to an old friend, Yusuf, a man in the import-export business, long retired, whom I'd met my first time in Turkey, when he was one of the few people in this circle who then spoke English. Two *shaikhs* of the order had lived and died, but Yusuf was still around.

We asked each other how we were, and told each other it was good to see you, and it was.

We had a more characteristic, disarmed conversation about the good Muslims and the bad Muslims. The bad Muslims, Yusuf told me—he had a certain tendency to lecture—sought political and military power, whereas "good Muslims, like us, we don't bother anybody."

I was happy to see him—a plump man, mostly bald, with smooth tea-colored skin, and now that he was retired and had gone on hajj to Mecca, probably more than once, he was letting his beard grow. It was improbably white and sparse and wispy. I didn't have to work too hard to steer the conversation away from the podium into the ease of reminiscence.

"Aw, you know," I told Yusuf after a time. "I'm just a tourist." This was the tip of an iceberg that had been floating through my mind lately: it had occurred to me that in real-life grown-up, no-shit mysticism, Enlightenment, Union, Liberation, Nirvana, call it what you will, is viewed not as the end but as the beginning of real development. Anything before that, for all its abundant interest, fascinating experience, and transcendent sights, qualifies as tourism, and for all the years I'd put in, according to this consideration I was still just a tourist.

Yusuf laughed and said, correctly, "We are all tourists in this world." He patted me on my shoulder.

I laughed and nodded yes at this release.

Privately I noted, around the table, how young men I'd known thirty years before had changed into graybeards like me, and how handsome strapping middle-aged dignitaries

ries had morphed into lined old
en with heavying tread and veiled
es in which the light was dimming,
emplary of the common doom.

And then it was time, if luck or
ace or the night permitted, to take
shot beyond its confining arc.

At the head of the table the
aikh rose from his seat, and we
all stood, in ceremonial
respect.

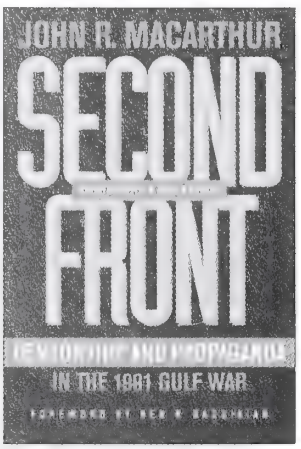
I had to wait for an open slot in
ie ablution room, shuffle into a pair
wood-soled sandals, clack across
ie tiles to do the correct ritual
easing of hands, arms, face, nos-
ils, ears, feet, then find my way
ack to the main room of the com-
ex, with its green walls and Arabic
lligraphy both framed and fres-
oed. This gathering was illegal, of
ourse, and the rite we were about to
ngage in—*zikr*, from the Arabic
*hikru'llah*, or rememoration of
od—was the central practice of
rtually all Sufi orders everywhere
the world. If there was anyone of-
cial or uncool in the house there'd
e prayers, a quick nod and exit from
ie *shaikh*, and that's all, folks. We
e licensed as appreciators of Turk-
h folk music and traditions and
at is all we are, good night.

In the event, there was a long se-
uence of normal Muslim prayers, or
*qat*, during which I did the few
orrect prayers I knew, which kept
ie in step with the bows and pros-
ations. After that there was a near-
interminable session of unison
*evlut*, long prayers of which I un-
erstood only a couple of tag phrases
nd so kept silent except for the oc-
asional *amins*, in the meantime ob-
erving the large room, heavily orna-
ented with Islamic calligraphy and
tual objects, packed with men
neeling, bowing, chanting their
ay in strict unison baritone
rough perhaps an hour's incanta-
on in Arabic, a language probably
nly a few of them spoke. Maybe
meone had died recently, or mar-
ed, or had a child.

The women were sequestered be-
ind a veiled lattice along one side of
ie room, where they participated in
ie rites, but separately. There are
ervish orders in which women not




# Headline News



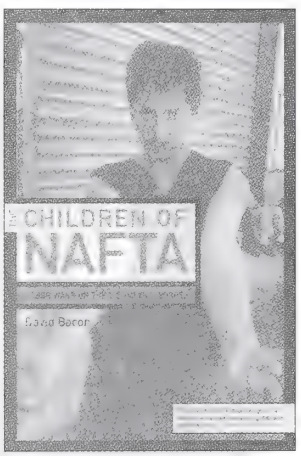

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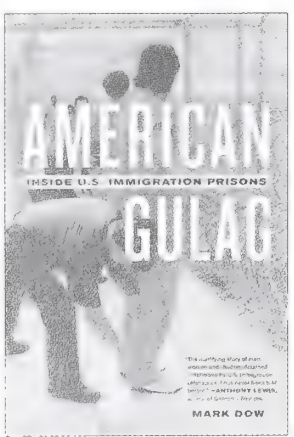
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only particu[illegible]
ly forever, my knees were in[illegible]
finally, thank God, it's over . . . but
watch: getting late, buses gone, prob-
ably find a taxi though —would there
be a[illegible]
frame drums like oversized tam-
bourines without the jingles, the
skins tuned loose for depth—held
high as they made their way across
the [illegible]. So, good: *zikr*
was about to begin. We were gonna
cook. I worked myself to my feet and
massaged my knees. I intended to
throw myself into the fire as far as I
would go, and then, who knows, I
might even apply myself seriously to
the practice.

Most *zikr*, a practice resembling
mantra, lifts off from the primary pro-
fession of the Islamic faith: *La ilaha
ill'Allah*—No divinity but *The* Divin-
ity, No God but *The* God—originally
a pointer for the polytheists of Mec-
ca, later the first principle of the new
religion and, taken esoterically, a
suggestion that there is no reality but
The Reality; i.e., nothing in manifest
or non-manifest existence but the
Divine Itselfness, and all subsequent
individuation therefore an itemized
declension, or, to cut to the chase,
there was only One Unique Being,
period, for Whom everything appar-
ently other than He is His particular-
ized self-expression, which does not
constitute an actual Otherness.

When these abstractions are put
into an intimate and active mode by
*zikr*, they can be quite a cauldron to
toss yourself into.

If, back in my twenties, when I
was in serious existential trouble,
I had shopped around for a spiritual
tradition, I probably would have
plunked for something pacific and
nondoctrinaire in the Buddhist or
Taoist line, though my big problem
there would have [illegible]
sit still too long. [illegible]
graceful fashion I stumbled in[illegible]
I found myself surprisingly at home,
and thought that [illegible]

totogical encounter, for burning
away the lesser versions of oneself
and the world as given, it was even
better than listening to a Coltrane
solo—in its successive theophanies
and annihilations it was like *living* a
Coltrane solo—and decades later
[illegible]

Time to live and die, with all the
terms laid bare.

We lifted off from a *La ilaha ill'Al-
lah* sounded in rapid unison near the
bottom of our massed male vocal
range. I knew this one: gradually
we'd take it up a Turkish minor scale
full of interior implication, increases
in tempo cued by the drummers or at
the center of our concentric rings by
a nod from the *shaikh*, and when we
had crested the gathering wave we'd
hit the turnaround for a swift plunge
down the laddering notes with a
sense of having stolen fire from heav-
en or been blown the gift for free.
Atop this swelling and recursion of
primordial human surf a solo singer
would arabesque his way through a
skirl of prayer whose words I'd always
been too lazy to ask about. As we as-
cended the scale we could feel the
energy rising, and we were off to the
races and flying for the light.

The only thing that bothered me
was that the sequence seemed a mite
short; we were going through it with
unaccustomed speed. Had all that
*mevlut* compressed the main event?

It seemed like maybe it had: we
were zooming through it. Here we
were already at the crest of the up-
surge, going over the top of it, the
tempo racing down and crashing our
assembled mortal vessels into the
blue-green and foam of fundamental
sea. It seemed a little rushed. The
initial movement of the *zikr* was
ending. That was quick. Hope the
rest of it doesn't go by that fast.

I struggled to my feet, and as the
[illegible] and their nephews gathered
in concentric, heavy-fleshed circles
linked serially arm over shoulder and
began their sidestepping dance as
the tempo slowed, found traction,
held, then trod ahead, I chose the
outermost circle and found a place. I
recognized the unison underchant,
the ground bass of this *tariqat*'s *zikr*,
expressed deep in the chest and
throat with a saw-toothed aspiration

and complicated switchbacks [illegible]
breath as we cross stepped clockwise
sideways in our circles, at whose cen-
ter the *shaikh* performed his rite o[illegible]
focus, a song soared up from the
drummers and other choristers; lack-
ing the lyrics, I stayed, percussive in
my heart and lungs, with the collec-
tive fundamental passacaglia of
*Hayy, ya Hayy, ya Hayy*, the oth-
er music rising around me, the voices
beginning their massive, humming
serpentine ascent.

In this tradition, God in his as-
pecting is said to possess Ninety-
Nine Most Beautiful Names, ninety-
nine a synecdoche for an infinite
number of qualities—the Almighty,
Wise, Beautiful, Most High, Creator,
Designer, Attorney, and so on, plus a
few dread names mentioned only in
a whisper, since He must not only
create but uncreate, not only give
life but take it back—and the funda-
mental note of this *zikr* was the
*Hayy*: Life, or God understood as the
Living. What typically happens if
you enter the *Hayy* at any depth is
that you tend to see the forms of the
world, your own not excluded, over-
whelmed and annihilate in the sin-
gleness that animates them, their
outlines obliterated by a tidal signa-
ture of primary light.

Some of this can be explained by
hyperventilation induced by the ex-
aggerated breathing pattern and its
consequent overoxygenation of the
brain, but I've checked, and unless
you meditate your way through the
terms of the *zikr*, using, if possible,
each repetition of the Name as an
occasion for the essential experience
of what is being invoked, all the
superheated huffa-puffa may get you
a little dizzy, but you won't see a-
thing. The *Hayy* answers wherever
you pitch the tent of your aspiration:
visionary states, momentary self-
magnification masquerading as sur-
render, or perhaps, why not, the
thing itself, the Absolute Ipseity,
since another of His names, not
much experienced by intellectuals in
the West these days but abundantly
available elsewhere, is the *Mujib*, He
who has obligated Himself to answer
prayer, so that He responds in the
form in which His believer has invit-
ed Him. The point of *zikr*, however

not to affirm Him in the form you bjectively imagine but to ascend m such limited affirmation toward e unqualifiable and unconditioned al; and for that ascent *zikr* may ll be an unsurpassable instrument.

In the outer orbit of the wheeling r my back caught on picture-med calligraphies along one wall the room; at other times my seg-nt of the line bumped against the k of drummers or tangled in some llective lag of the pace; but then 'd get unstuck and stumble on. ring one of our rounds I spotted e young American with the tas-led trousers, about whom I'd let self get snooty on the patio, and w him immersed in the *zikr*, taking as far as his experience of himself d his working definitions of the iverse allowed him and daring all nits down, which is the best any of can do: affirm the reality whole d transcendent and One, blow ur fictive self away, and see what's t in the aftermath. We were all in is together, brother human motes d moments, striving to get past rselves and all that through-a-ss-darkly jive into the finally Real.

The rings of *zikr* spun Tassel-ousers around the bend, and we undered on indiscriminately rough the dust of worlds dying and born, the shuttering and unshutter-g of existential film. For all the ums and voices and occasional ies of illumination, we did this in atmosphere remarkably free of nzy. Here and there someone came dibly alight, a candle flame rising ), then dimming with a shift in the ind. The tenor of any particular *zikr* ves a great deal to the taste and mperament of the *shaikh* who leads it can present anything from a de-berately laissez-faire conflagration a composure behind which all in-r fires are hidden. This particular *aikh*'s *zikr* smoothly combined pow-and decorum; it was a thrumming gine whose inner pistons worked eadily and well, with no dramatic ars from the tailpipe or squealing res when the rubber hit the road.

I usually find my way pretty easily to ecstasies and visionary states—a eakness, under certain considera-ons. Ecstasies are the sugar candy of the spiritual diet, and if all you do is gratify your sweet tooth you'll spoil your appetite for dinner or, your palate sugared over, won't even taste dinner when it's served. Shortly I found myself cross-stepping to the *Hayy*, one life of light from highest starshine to deepest earth and myself refined to mere shape, no more substantial than a paper cutout, albeit for the moment one of Matissean grace, an instance of Divine script in its motion through the Book.

And that's when I experienced a quiet shock of recognition, a shudder of memory that delivered me to another, prior shock that was its reflected image: shortly after the overthrow of Saddam's regime in Iraq, the Shiites were able for the first time in decades to celebrate their rites of pilgrimage, and I'd seen video footage of them mass-chanting themselves into trance and fever on the streets of Najaf and Karbala, swinging rhythmic arms and thumping themselves on their chests as part of the incantation and then, sure enough, because they were Shiites with a cult of martyrology dating back thirteen centuries, slicing their heads open and covering themselves in blood; but the blood didn't do it: it was the earlier chant-and-thump, to which I reacted like any scion of Western civilization, with a kind of horror at the gore and chaos such belief and practice were likely to unleash—all that Islamic *heat*—and several seconds passed before I remembered that, short of self-laceration, I liked to do that kind of stuff myself.

That was the shock part of it. The recognition came one tick later.

Unless you've experienced the power and directness of what Islamic practice offers, you just don't know; even evangelical Christians with their whoops and faintings have to contend with a characteristic Christian schism between soul and body, plus the confusing algebra of a trinity and an intervening Jesus; whereas here, in the Islamic alembic, in a single heat animated by a single fire, everything is cooked to singularity, to monotheism taken whole in one sweeping descent, the line gorgeous as Arabic orthography, writing itself through you in a slash that is at once



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sword and script and healing balm. Unless you've lived the sweetness of that wound [illegible] the Sun [illegible] you really know what's animating all those fevered, incomprehensible Muslims out there on TV or in their [illegible] almost unlimited energy available for the asking; and watching those chanting thumping bleeding Shiites on television and wondering what fresh hell their fervency might unleash, it struck me afresh, in a moment of recognition, that what was crucially important to such practice [illegible] one brought to it. If all you wanted was to affirm your local sect, necessarily opposed to other sects in the next county or continent, or to fuel a sense of inflamed self-righteousness as a member of the one true religion or its only authentic subcult, why there it was, all the high-octane fuel your vehicle could possibly require. And if the *Hayy* could blow away the particularized forms of living beings in a supervening wealth of metaphysical fire, how large a step was it, for a crudely stoked understanding, to the obliteration of actual living beings—those nothings, those mere apparencies—by a fervent bomb strapped around your middle or an RPG bought from that nice gentleman over there, if the channels of your understanding of the sacred ran down such gullies?

Back in Brooklyn in front of the televised chanting Shiites, I'd felt a self-critical shudder just for having been, now and then, on the same figurative carpet with them and had felt compelled, for a provisional moment, to wonder to what extent the entire tradition was blighted, from deepest taproot to its most refined and esoteric leaftips.

Now, here in Istanbul, caught in the locking glass, as in the unmodulated blast of fervency I stomped the manifest world to dust and fought to lose myself in their greater light of origin, bingo: hauled onto the literal carpet—carpets actually: once or twice my stocking feet dumbled over an edge, a seam—I seemed for a moment the living form of the perplexity itself, a one-man culture clash.

What was I involved with here?

Oh, I knew these were fine and peaceful people I was stomping through the universe with tonight, and that the object of the ruthless of militant abusers of the fundamentals and that Turkey was the most forward-looking, future-friendly of all Muslim nations. That wasn't the point. With unnerving suddenness I'd been thrust into a jagged, unfamiliar perception of my best-loved, most spontaneously embraced spiritual practice, and for a moment it had shown the sharpness of its limits, even, potentially, a honed sectarian edge that could be put to lethal purpose, if its gleam caught someone's eye that way.

This *zikr*, usually prolonged for an hour or more, seemed to have reached its climax due to the exigencies of *mevlut* in fifteen, twenty minutes, tops. Our turning circles bunched together, electron rings collapsing upon themselves as if to compress some final atom of striving human substance, which is to say that several tons of jumping Turkish uncle belted out a percussive *Hayy! Hayy! Hayy!* that shook the walls and floor until we almost audibly hit the bell at the top of the night's available ascent and came down collectively radiant; but to what extent, I wondered, did the glow and smiles and embraces of the aftermath savor of accustomed orgasm reliably achieved and not some fresh intellection or intuition of the unmodified Absolute?

I looked around the crowded happy room. Who's to say?

Continuing the rites of tourism, I paid calls on old and new friends around town—some at home, some in their shops, others alas in their graves. I toured the palaces, domes, and minarets, ferried up and down the Bosphorus. For some reason it took me several days to make it across the Golden Horn—called *Kılıç*, or the Sword, in Turkish, its waters curve in laterally from the Bosphorus to divide the old Byzantine city from the newer part of town, once ceded by the declining empire to the European powers. Much of the architecture in the nineteenth-century heart of it is French; farther north, cheap generic modernism shoulders through random shabbiness, with lovely residential intermissions here and there.

It was at the end of dusk, just a little blush left up there in the velvet, that I emerged from a labyrinth of ash-gray side streets to join the endless, mostly young crowd promenading in the brightness of Istiklal Caddesi, which at its southern end runs past the faded glory of the old imperial embassies and ends, north, in the exhaust-choked expanse of Taksim Square.

My last visit to Istiklal Caddesi four years back was the first look I'd had at it since its transformation from a chichi shopping street to a still chichi but vastly updated pedestrian thoroughfare with a little antique trolley clanging up and down its middle now and then. It made a bad impression on me at the time.

Yes, between the packed boutiques and restaurants and chain stores—a Benetton, a McDonald's, a Diesel, and the homegrown Mavi Jeans—there were all the new bookshops and cafés I'd heard about, a riotous overspill of music, and an endlessly stirring multitude, but I hadn't seen young faces rubbed so raw by collective social hunger since freezing Moscow in the Gorbachev years, and it seemed to me that for the current generation, Turkey, rising to the bright commercial always dangling Western lure, might have sold out the life and values it owned as heritage—social and familial cohesion, ready access to a certain depth of heart—without having enough cash to buy into the video-gizmo world flashing in its place. What made the crowd seem an expressionist exaggeration of itself were the packs of wild dogs circulating at its feet: forlorn, mournful dogs, the heart worn out of them by the hundred, and because an English friend of mine had written a song whose refrain ran, "What will become of the Bosphorus dogs?"—the dogs were everyone who'd ever come to this crossroad of the world seeking a scrap of grace or favor—I paid particular attention. To:

One pale brown hound, bellied on the pavement, who seized a passing

rn white plastic cup in his epaws, snapped at it, and was able a moment to pretend he'd found nething tasty and nutritious before eyes went hollow again and his ad dropped.

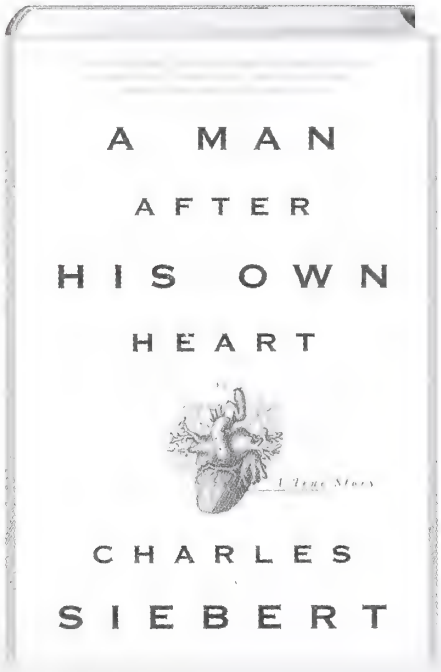
Another creature, also hound aped but mottled brown and white, ıo sidled up behind an unseeing ır-kid gaggle and made believe he longed to them for five full sec-ds, his stance and posture trans-rmed by the pretense, head and unches lifted into the dignity of ving a place in the world, briefly.

This was at the rag end of the lamitous Turkish nineties, when a ies of impotent minority coalition vernments presided over inflation, rruption, and a Kurdish insurrec-ɔn in the impoverished southeast which 37,000 lives were extin-ished, scores of villages were flat-ned, and almost 400,000 people re rendered homeless in a region which the summers are an oven d the winters lethal. The decade as capped by the Marmara earth-ake, over seven on the Richter ale just sixty miles east—close ough and strong enough to grab anbul by its lapels and shake it ard—whose official death toll of 5,000 was generally thought to ave been discounted by half. In mit and other cities near the epi-nter, the army had had to stop traged mobs from wreaking bloody urder on the owners of construc-ɔn firms whose poured concrete ildings, supported by strictly no-ɔnal straws of "structural" steel and wilderness of bribes, buried thou-nds in a single shudder. Plenty of milarly hasty tenements had been ɔured in Istanbul, a city of fifteen official million, and the thought at the next quake in its march ong the fault line might plant its ot just offshore in the Sea of Mar-ara was enough to frost any sea of ces with a premonitory chill.

The manifest incompetence with hich the authorities handled the 999 earthquake drove a last nail to the coffin of the old political or-r, its creaking parties and superan-uated pols; and at the end of it, Re-ep Tayyip Erdoğan (the "ğ" parates the vowels and is not itself




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gleam again, was just about the only man left standing.

He was once a full-blown political Islamist—[illegible]—but is now the champagne offered him by a foreign dignitary, a roadie must prestidigitate a glass of ginger ale before Erdoğan [illegible] was sent to prison for an impolitic pronouncement but is now the republic's prime minister and the head of the "reformed" Islamist Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partesi*, yielding the acronym AK, one of several Turkish words meaning "white," hence pure, clean, uncorrupted), which professes itself secularist politically and Islamic culturally and controls an unstoppable majority of 367 to 183 in parliament. Since coming to power, despite the stumbles of its inexperience and occasional rumors of corrective coup from generals anxious about the health of Atatürk's secularist heritage, and despite the AK Party's serial fiasco of involvement in Bush's war in Iraq, this party of devout Muslims has outreformed the reformers and outwesternized the westernizers. Partly in an attempt to gain admission to the European Union but also to enact overdue reforms, it has decoupled the army from government, reducing its supervisory capacity to an advisory one only; eliminated the death penalty; reformed the judicial system and the police; given the Kurds unprecedented cultural and linguistic freedom; and affirmed human rights in keeping with the European norm. This has been accomplished seamlessly enough on paper; the crunch will come as implementation proceeds or does not, in the coming year. Police torture is endemic to the region, as is violent military overreaction to phantasms of disorder, and reeducation and retraining programs, however well intended, are notoriously slow, when they're productive at all.

Remarkably, no one I spoke with in Turkey outside of the AK Party last summer believed that the AK was anything but a front for an unreconstructed Islamist takeover—though they've been gaining credibility steadily since, as despite [illegible] in New York the political scene has steadied, the European prospect drawn nearer, and the economy improved while, crucially, no troops were sent to die for George W. Bush in Iraq. Even so, this year the AK Party will have to convince not only Europe but much of its own population that it means what it says; even so, they've put the country on a reforming and westernizing course—potentially the most radical since Atatürk's day, and one that no purely secularist left-wing party could have pushed through without accusations of crypto-communism and a betrayal of the Turkish nation's roots—which, unless Europe betrays Turkey completely, cannot be reversed.

By the time I returned to Istiklal last summer it was MTV out there: more than water, more than money, the universal solvent. And the girls—good Lord, what a show, plunging necklines, gold lamé, and all. When I first came to Turkey, in the seventies, the few Turkish women I was able to meet were so thoroughly wrapped and kerchiefed, even in cosmopolitan Istanbul, it seemed to me that, aside from the usual allotment of luscious movie stars and against the drift of orientalist cliché, Turkish women just weren't up there in the looks department; but now, after maybe a decade of MTV and its epigones, it was all a dirty old bohemian could do to keep his eyes from bugging out of his head all obvious. It was a drop-dead-gorgeous show out there, wonderful young faces lit by their own eagerness to live, lots of shapely bodies, tight fit and flesh revealed, the baremidriff look just starting up, and an outer-borough vibe to it all—as a New Yorker, I thought of cute Italian girls from Bay Ridge hitting the streets of the Village, only thousands at a time and in unprecedented efflorescence. As for the guys accompanying them or on the prowl, young Turkish men had always managed to look dark and macho and mysterious, but this year they seemed nonplussed by all the unleashed femininity on parade. It wasn't their show anymore: they were vague and out of focus, displaced persons in unfamiliar air.

There were fewer street dogs this time too, but I wasn't under any illusion that kindly people had taken them home.

Istiklal Caddesi was a blast of sexed up carefree energy, and I walked against its tide up to Taksım, Istanbul's soi-disant Times Square equivalent, to buy a *dürüm* of döner kebab and a container of yogurty *ayran* to protect my stomach from an attack of *la turista*, then ambled back down the torrent, licking my greasy fingertips to see what I could see.

The place was popping. Music and video poured from doorways and vitrines upon the tide of youngsters, the passing generations at their song—Turkish versions of Europop; lubricious Turkish babes in whom a show of T&A overtopped the singing; Michael Jackson, Cyndi Lauper, the factitious bleat of Céline Dion, occasionally a slice of true Anatolian wail, and, as everywhere, too much Madonna. There seemed a free chaotic happiness in the random overspill, especially among the women, glorying in a fresh amplitude of light and life and, hey, freedom after long suppression, and I thought: More power to you and let's hear it for Turkey's continuing adventure in democracy; although a friend of mine in central Anatolia, wised up internationally and now the father of a son and daughter, would wonder with some bitterness one week later "why the young women of my country are dressing now like prostitutes." It was true: ten years earlier the Turkish girl who looked like anyone in the current crowd on Istiklal Caddesi would have been solicited for sex or calabashed for hookery. How would all this flash and change have struck me if I were really from the neighborhood?

I ambled into a bookstore that had a café upstairs and confirmed that, as on my previous visit, the literature of the Western world was abundantly available, translated, in well-designed trade paperbacks. A lot of recent novels too, most of them Amer-

ın, and up-to-date. Although I'd
en paid six hundred bucks and
ange for the rights, I noted that
; own *Ayı Evine Geliyor*, a book
at sprang to life when I saw a
ncing bear on its way home from
ork near the Spice Bazaar, was not
t among them.

I pulled a book out here and there,
check the translations where I could.
"*Uzan zaman, geceleri erkenden
ttım*," began *Swann'lann Tarafı*, by
arcel Proust.

And "*evet dediydim evet isterim Evet*,"
ended *Ulysses*, by James
Joyce.

A few nights later, in the free
r of Istanbul, I was back at the
ıdisclosable address, and the palm
evening's empire displayed anoth-
side of the coin in a flash of wel-
me silver.

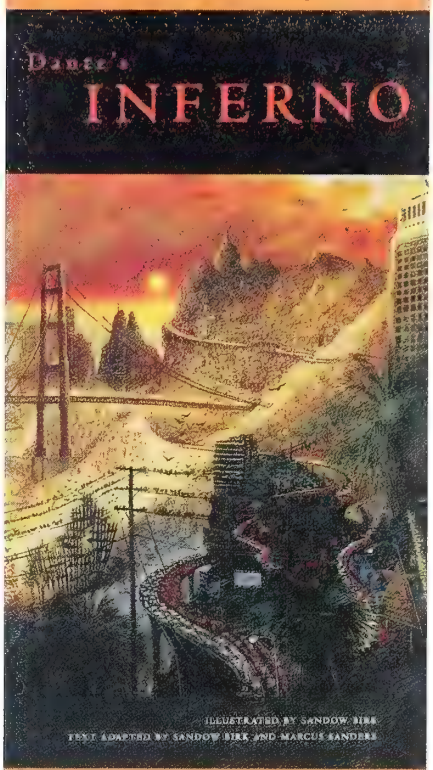
Due to a collegial arrangement be-
veen *tariqats*, it was whirling dervish
ght. Most of us sat in a side room
ıd sang a series of devotional hymns,
we knew the words, accompanied by
ums, *ney*—the famous end-blown
urkish reed flute—*oud*, and a ham-
ered dulcimer, or *kanun*. The room
e'd done *zikr* in the other night was
sible through a set of archways, and
ter the music had gone on for fifteen
inutes or so, its tenor changed and
s rhythm slowed, and a dozen Mevle-
dervishes entered the *zikr* room in
slow ritual procession additionally
olemnized by their long black cloaks
ıd columnar tan felt headgear. The
levlevi *tariqat* derives from the na-
onal saint and poet Mevlana
ılaluddin Rumi, now enjoying a sec-
nd career as the best-selling poet in
ıe U.S.A. Rumi's preeminence as
oth unofficial national poet and na-
onal saint ensures the Mevlevi an
nprimatur and a certain public life:
ıe whirling dervishes are, along with
tanbul's domes and minarets and to
lesser extent the tulip, the nation's
ogo. Their annual December festi-
al in Konya is well attended, and
ıeir whirling ceremony, or *sema*, is
erformed in Istanbul and elsewhere
n scheduled occasions throughout
ıe year.

Here they began with three slow
ircumambulations of the room to a
low asymmetrical march in rondo
form. Each dervish bowed low each time he passed before the *shaikh* on his red sheepskin or crossed his axis on the other side of the circle. When three circlings were completed the dervishes cast off their funereal robes to reveal the white-skirted costumes beneath. Then, after a change of music, the dervishes, one by one, were sent off on their orbits after an inclination before the *shaikh*, who likewise inclined to them, whispering a blessing. The dervishes bobbined a few times with their arms crossed on their chests, then unspun their limbs and blossomed open, spinning as decorously as clockwork figures, arms outraised, right palms offered up to receive the heavenly blessing, or *baraka*, if it came, left palms turned down to dispense it without discrimination; but as I remembered it the main flow came down through the middle of you without limit, and you handled what you could or just let go.

The first time I tried the Turn myself, after very rudimentary instruction at a school in England called Beshara in 1972, years before I came to Turkey, I stepped out on to the new smooth tongue-and-groove floorboards of a looming limestone country barn and tried to keep track of what I'd been told: pivot on the left foot, push round with the right, this palm up, that one down, and most of all center yourself in the heart, not your stomach, or you'll just get dizzy or even a little sick. My mind ticked through these instructions like an anxious adding machine, and I spent my initial spin doing the accounts while trying not to fall over. The next night, however, as I began the Turn I wondered to myself what this business of centering in the heart was all about, and as I outspread my arms after the first few revolutions I received one of the shocks of my life in answer. With no as-if or metaphorical equivalence about it, I found myself outside time—something you know, when it happens to you without ameliorative shading, as simply as you'd know whether you were soaking in a bathtub or standing next to it dry—held perfectly still, while my body and the barn and the encircling English night revolved around me: all that was subject to rise and fall and change was in motion, but an imperishable center of myself stood free and



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clear. There was a votive candle burning in a corner [illegible] repeatedly past like [illegible] was an extended, objective moment wholly apart from the flavor [illegible] ple's common [illegible] able. You're reminded [illegible] these early on, stars to steer by [illegible] you return to the [illegible] haul in your leaky human vessel.

[illegible] many [illegible] grinding [illegible] heart's native grain, sometimes a downpour of grace, sometimes only a crucifying pain in the shoulders as you struggle to keep your arms up. I hardly ever turn anymore.

Thirty years later in Istanbul, I had to crane my neck uncomfortably to see the turners in the neighboring room. The Mevlevi are not the only dervishes who whirl. The Qadiri and the Rifai (or Howling) Dervishes indulge in faster and more fevered revolutions, sometimes with bellows of *Allah!* announcing fresh breakthroughs of vision or, who knows, sometimes to show off a little. Later that summer in Konya, I saw someone doing the Rifai Turn at a roaring Qadiri *zikr*—it was Tassel-Pants the American, now dressed and capped in dervish gear and baggy Turkish *shalvar*—and after fifteen minutes of rapid whirling and a few preludial bellows he screamed horribly, clutched his head with both hands, and fell to a fetal position on the floor, trembling in every limb for a couple of minutes. It was distracting, and several people present thought the display in dubious taste, but no one threw a hissy fit. An older Turkish woman who had been secluded behind a gauzy curtain during the *zikr* was the most upset by it but seemed mollified when I told her, as we departed into the night, that the trembling screamer had been an American. "Ah, of course," she said, as if that covered it. As for myself, I'd thought of stepping into the circle and showing Trembling Tassel-Pants how the thing was done, but unfortunately I was suffering a particularly galling attack of *la turista* and wasn't sure, if I began the Turn and opened myself to what came, that I could get through a demonstration of my prowess with my chinos unsoiled. Sometimes it seems to me that the comedy will never end, that it will always find fresh refractions, and none of us will escape its notice, ever.

I was getting a crick in my neck trying to see the dervishes through the arches in the neighboring room. The Mevlevi is the most refined of turns, emphasizing the suprapersonal objectivity of its locus, rejecting the admixture or expression of intermediate personal emotion—as the other night's *zikr*, for example, had not—and preserving an unflawed decorum no matter what lesser illusory worlds or selves rise and set, are incinerated or fall away. In short, there wasn't a lot for me to see: clockwork figures dressed like pastry chefs, rotating evenly and not very fast while the music played. I could search the dervishes' faces for outward signs of inner process, but chances were I'd be wrong, despite my dollop of prior experience. The hazards of observation: Heisenberg strikes again. There was a hint of the objectivity of Mevlevi gnosis in a line of Rumi's, though: "If you split an atom," he wrote sometime in the thirteenth century, "you will find a little sun, and planets that revolve." Granted that he may have been arguing from a Hermetic premise of cosmological symmetry—as above, so below—it's an impressive line, 700 years before Rutherford and Fermi, not to mention 250 before Copernicus. For all we know, it's an eyewitness report. Stranger things have happened, and to lesser people than Rumi. For all I knew, the whirling ceremony—formal, aestheticized, and grave—in the adjacent room was cosmological in its penetration, but my ability to know that was as circumscribed as its orbits perhaps were not.

That didn't mean I didn't want to participate. Happenstance had placed me on a cushion along a wall just to the left of the leftmost frame-drummer, who had deposited a number of unplayed drums behind him, and I kept trying to catch his eye. I played decent *bendir* and had studied Mevlevi music enough to know the rhythmic cycles, and so over the next half-hour I performed a half-shy incremental sidling nearer, ready to give the drummer and his extra drum an inquisitive nod—hey man, mind if I sit in?—but between my diffidence his absorption, and the formality the occasion nothing came of th small and inchpace comedy.

In the fourth cycle of turns in th long, symphonic *sema*, with a quic ening, then abruptly a stilling of th drummed ensemble's music, th *shaikh* came off his red sheepskin the accompaniment of a solo *kan* improvising an arpeggiated caden out of tempo, and performed, am the faster whirling dervishes in the whites, in small, halting, old-m steps, his particular, poignant Tur arms held to his chest and one har tugging open, in drama made powe ful by its restraint, the edge of h black tunic to reveal the white co ton cloth that covered his heart. A ter perhaps three minutes he bo bined back to his sheepskin, then halted and bowed low, the cerem nial surface unflawed, th private depth held withi

On my last day in town I boug a splash cymbal in Beyoğlu for four-year-old friend of mine wh seemed determined to become drummer, and I was walking sou with it on the Galata Bridge acr the Golden Horn back to the O City when I paused to look ea across the Bosphorus to Uskudar a the hills above it, the first of As The solitary house I lived in Küçük Çamlıca in 1975, once visib as a notch on the southern profile the hill as it descended from its c of forest through a thickening scri mage of stucco walls and terra-cot rooftops to the Sea of Marmara, h been rubbed away, and the hill as I known it was gone, its top now a s fi clutter of broadcast relay towe stalky, tall, and tin. Mahmoud Ra the elegant but impoverished septu genarian Ottoman gentleman—h mother's side of the family h owned and operated Egypt once u on a time; he preferred Carl Jung Sufism, his house had neither wat nor electricity, and when steppi out he belted his blue serge dre slacks with a length of old rope- who shared his Çamlıca home wi me died the year after I left.

It was a mid-August afternoon, h soft haze in the air as I looked nile or so across the storied wa- s to the shore of Asia. In the rbor at my feet the ferries—white th yellow trim, crossed red an- ors on their stacks, and ship- aped, not fat, haunchy wallowers the public waters carrying cars— ossed and recrossed, skillfully ckwatering to park at the quais as e untamed waters of the Horn aked and tossed and the teeming y came right down to the blue. you get older your dead accumu- e on the farther shore and your ir and beard turn gray to impli- te you inextricably in the com- n story, some days more tolera- y than others. Everything in the enomenal world is swept away, as by an enormous comb, on a regu- basis: not an original percep- n, I'm afraid, but that last day in anbul it had an interesting se- el. I began to see—no mystical perience this time, the reader ay be relieved to learn, just a vol- tary work of quotidian imagina- n—in a series of multiple expo- res or palimpsests superimposed on the vitality of the harbor, a neral representation of the mil- n million lives that had come d gone to and from this city in ave upon wave: the Byzantines in eir tiled and golden height; the rks and their generations across e Ottoman centuries, conquest d culture, long decline, the Tulip ge, palace revolutions, teeming ultitudes across these hills and aters, costume after costume, hu- anly faceted face after face, each ir of eyes bright with the energies its unrepeatable life. I'd read ough history to make out some of e detail in this crowd, and it was incredible, superpopulated spec- cle, all of it gilded by the majesty the setting: Constantinopolis, Is- nbul, they changed the name, but is the one and only city of the eat mixed world.

I wished the old place the best of th worlds, tried to take the view whole, then shifted the cymbal neath my arm, put my shoulder the wheel, and walked on across e bridge. ■



**FOR THE FIRST TIME, PERHAPS, A TENABLE HISTORY OF JESUS**

It won't be found in the Bible. Critical examination of the New Testament Gospels reveal sloppy history, which gives a picture of Jesus more imaginative than factual. Most Christians seem not to notice or care---transcendentalism spins its own reality. But true realists, for whom historical accuracy matters, may be pleased with what the recently discovered *Gospel of Thomas* provides. It consists of 113 notes taken down by Thomas of perplexing things that Jesus said. Thus the notes were probably written down at the time heard and have not suffered alteration ---the best kind of source for a history.

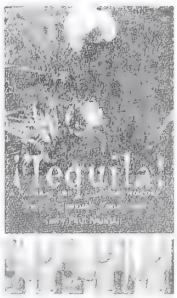
Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. He provides all the text of the notes with comments and Marcan context, thereby developing a narrative of Jesus that is tenably historical.

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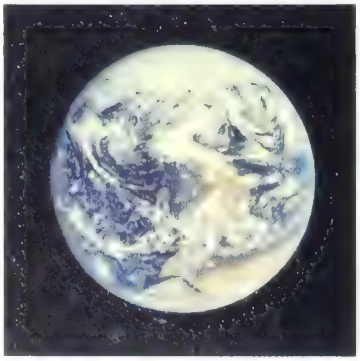


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# IGNOBLE LIARS

## Leo Strauss, George Bush, and the philosophy of mass deception

*By Earl Shorris*

*President Bush's advocacy of "regime change"—which avoids the pitfalls of a wishful global universalism on the one hand, and a fatalistic cultural determinism on the other—is a not altogether unworthy product of Strauss's rehabilitation of the notion of regime.*

—William Kristol and Steven Lenzner

In the 1950s, inside the University of Chicago, then the most left-wing university in the United States, hidden somewhere among the graduate divisions, the accidental father of the worst in American politics taught Plato and Montesquieu, Spinoza, Machiavelli, and Hobbes. Leo Strauss arrived at Chicago when the hard sciences were in their ascendance there, not many years after the first nuclear chain reaction was created under the old West Stands of the abandoned football field. The newcomer was outgunned by the big-time Aristotelians, such as Richard McKeon, and despised by the doyenne of citizenship, Hannah Arendt. If Strauss and the logician Albert Wohlstetter, who was responsible for the Cold War theory of mutually assured destruction, knew each other at all, it was to nod in passing. Strauss and the social scientists found each other unbearable, for he disagreed with Max Weber, and the sociologists hated him for it. In worldly things Strauss suffered from arrogance and timidity, partly the result of the Platonist's anxiety: the fear that, like Socrates, he would be put to death for being a philosopher. Yet Strauss, with his endowed chair, more than stood his ground on a campus where Aristotle held sway. The renowned Committee on Social Thought never included Strauss, but he had disciples, and disciples have two duties: to sit at the feet of the master and to spread word of his wisdom. The "Straussians" have excelled at their work, for Leo Strauss is the most widely discussed writer on philosophy in our time.



The master, who bears a striking resemblance in some photographs to the comedian Jack Benny, had but one core idea: read old books carefully. It was a stroke of genius, and nothing more invigorating or enlightening could be said about education, but it was not news on a campus run by Robert Maynard Hutchins, one of the inventors of the Great Books curriculum. Strauss professed to teach other men's work; he had nothing of his own but commentaries and an attitude about himself and his own mind that infected the youth gathered around him. His disciples in turn methodically infected and then corrupted the government of the most powerful nation on earth. They have done so not only recently but since first touching the Reagan Administration a quarter of a century ago—in social policy and politics initially, then more particularly in the Department of Defense, until now there appears to be no end to the damage that is being done in the name of Leo Strauss.

I have been told many times that any attempt to write seriously about

*Earl Shorris is a contributing editor of* Harper's Magazine. *His new book,* The Life and Times of Mexico, *will be published by W. W. Norton in August.*

Illustration by Edward del Rosario

[illegible] mic publication is a fool's errand. Since I am accustomed to running [illegible] I read the late professor's books, two books and countless articles about his books, and I [illegible] what he had said and how it [illegible] current political regime. I failed at this, not once but several times: too abstract, too rabbinical, too long, too short, too difficult, who cares? It was easy enough to find popular articles about Strauss. They all made much the same case: all neoconservatives are Straussians. But they did not attempt to say whether all Straussians were neoconservatives. In fact, they did not appear to know what Leo Strauss had said about the philosophers or what his disciples had made of his work. The *New York Times* got the names of some Straussians in government right, but not the names of the institutions where he taught and the dates and other such arcana. Don't blame them, at least not for their ignorance of Strauss's work. Leo Strauss is more difficult to read than almost anyone, including Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Joyce at his most involuted and eloquent. The reason for the difficulty grows out of Strauss's intent: He believed in what you and I would call bad writing. He buttered it with the word "esoteric," but "bad" is the right word, unless you prefer "lousy." Here was a man who did not want to be understood by any but the few, his disciples. Obscurantism is a conceit, and it is an old technique. Every new religion throughout history has used it. Apparently Strauss had dreams of glory. He had no desire to be intelligible; on the contrary, if his work was to have any effect in the world it would be only as his disciples shaped it to fit the time. They were not marketers, these disciples. If Strauss had taught them anything, it was arrogance; they would remake the world in their own image.

Strauss himself lived and thought in response to the events of his time. He was born in Kirchheim, Germany, in the last year of the nineteenth century. As a young man he was an ardent Zionist, a student of the best philosophers of his time, including Martin Heidegger, whom he declared the most brilliant and original philosopher of the twentieth century. Strauss engaged in research in Jewish studies, and in 1932, having seen what was to come, the prescient and perturbed young scholar left Germany, first for France, then England. While in England he wrote a book on Hobbes, an endeavor supported by a Rockefeller grant.

In 1933 news arrived in England of an event that haunted Strauss for the rest of his life. On German Armistice Day of that year, Martin Heidegger, the author of *Being and Time* and rector of the University of Freiburg, had delivered a pro-Nazi speech and allowed himself to be photographed in the company of uniformed Nazi officers and thugs. I do not think it is possible to overestimate the effect on Strauss's life and work of Heidegger's betrayal of philosophy. In 1938, Strauss fled Europe entirely, settling in New York City, where like many Jewish refugee scholars he taught at the New School for Social Research. War came the next year. In his forty years, Strauss had seen the start of two world wars, the beginning of the Holocaust, and the takeover of the Soviet Union by Joseph Stalin. He had himself escaped the whirlwind, which he saw as the collapse of the liberal democracies.

According to Strauss the fall of Heidegger was the hideous end of a progression of modernism that had begun with Machiavelli, whom Strauss regarded as the first modern philosopher. Strauss denounced Machiavelli as a "teacher of evil," not so much for counseling his prince to be ruthless in pursuit of worldly power as for betraying the principles of ancient philosophy. "His discovery," Strauss wrote, "is implied in the principle that one must take one's bearings from how men live as distinguished from how they ought to live." Prior to Machiavelli, philosophy had taken its bearing by the eternal truths; after him, philosophy was concerned with the ignoble reality of how men actually live. If this world had become intolerable, if history had gone wrong, Strauss believed, the only solution lay in the old books. Only the ancients could be trusted, only the perennial questions were worth considering. One had only [illegible] read them carefully, slowly, uncov[illegible] ing their secret teachings. Strauss [illegible] tracted the students who thou[illegible] themselves brilliant, and they w[illegible] shiped him as the inventor of "pol[illegible] cal philosophy," which would ha[illegible] come as a surprise to Plato, Aristot[illegible] and other authors of the old books [illegible] proposed to study.

Because he was an extreme co[illegible] servative, many of the young m[illegible] (there were no women, so far a[illegible] know, and his most famous stud[illegible] was Allan Bloom, a vicious miso[illegible] nist) who sat at his feet were alrea[illegible] dabblers in conservative or re[illegible] tionary thought. They idoliz[illegible] Strauss as an earlier generation h[illegible] embraced Marx. They saw a char[illegible] to change the order of the world. [illegible] the excitement of this unlimited a[illegible] bition, the Straussian cult was bo[illegible] And Strauss died. He sufferec[illegible] heart attack while teaching at t[illegible] University of Chicago, recover[illegible] spent a year at Claremont Me[illegible] College, and then taught at [illegible] John's until the end came in 19[illegible] Without question he was a brilli[illegible] professor, a frightened man wh[illegible] ideas, having been battered into h[illegible] ing by historic events, were ecce[illegible] tric. He had produced some jour[illegible] articles, delivered the Walgreen L[illegible] tures, never to my knowledge a[illegible] peared in the "public press," ma[illegible] no radio or television appearanc[illegible] and during his lifetime found bu[illegible] small group of readers for his boo[illegible]

He died obscure and [illegible] from home.

It is safe to say that neither Ron[illegible] Reagan nor the Bushes have read L[illegible] Strauss, and certainly no politici[illegible] needs to be taught how to lie by a p[illegible] fessor of philosophy.* Perhaps Willi[illegible] Kristol, while serving as Dan Quayl[illegible]

** Over the last year or so, some Straussi[illegible] have made a point of denying their teach[illegible] influence in matters of policy. Aside fr[illegible] the fact that such denials are in perfect ke[illegible] ing with the Straussian approach to pu[illegible] discourse, we need not be concerned w[illegible] proving direct lines of influence. A br[illegible] summary of Straussian doctrine suffices [illegible] demonstrate its affinity with what one mi[illegible] call the "mind of the regime," whether [illegible] particular member of the Bush Administ[illegible] tion has read Strauss or not.*

ief of staff, tutored the vice presi-
nt in the finer points of Platonic
olitics. But it is unlikely. The step
om philosophy to action is almost
ways circuitous, Machiavelli being
ne of the rare exceptions. Strauss's
eas about ideas took the usual path,
cked and poked and punched, mu-
ting here, understood selectively
ere. At one time, Strauss wrote a
ntence in which he opposed pre-
ntive war. How disappointed his fol-
wers in the Department of Defense
ould be to read it now in light of the
reckage they have made!

The career of Strauss's teachings is
ne of the wonders and the dangers of
ne book, as the master himself might
ave said, knowing that the long life of
ooks, unlike newspapers or television,
bound up with history in a process of
ndirection. The ideas in books some-
ow manage to wiggle through the
norass of individuals and information
n large modern societies and become
ffective. The way is not clear, but the
ct of it often gives surcease to the
ains of laboring in obscurity. Sophists
nce proceeded by eristic (arguing to
in rather than in search of wisdom),
nd they still do, but in our time it has
ecome more efficacious to whisper in
ne ear of the king.*

Strauss was content to write books
n obscurity and to convey the ideas in
hem to a few students here and there
ver the years. These students carried
n the work, teaching Strauss to their
tudents, creating a growing network
ntil there are now Straussians on the faculty at many, if not most, American colleges and universities. Since Straussians revel in the difficulty of the master's work, they attract very bright students, many of whom will remain in the academy, producing other Straussian scholars, writers, activists, and members of government at every level, a cadre that will soon begin to think of itself as a class, that class for which Plato could find no better name than gold. Surely, this class does not, like Socrates, merit the hemlock for corrupting the youth, but it does merit more than finger-pointing. An argument should begin.

### THE GREATEST CLARITY IS A CONTRADICTION

For the uninitiated, "contradiction" is the key to the Straussian approach, and more than anything else it defines the Bush regime and its circle of influentials. The contradictory and absurd statements of George W. Bush need not be listed here. His collected solecisms have been published in multiple volumes and are scattered throughout the Internet. Donald Rumsfeld's most inscrutable utterances have even been set in verse. Such deformations of the English language are no accident: they reflect the administration's general pattern of communication.

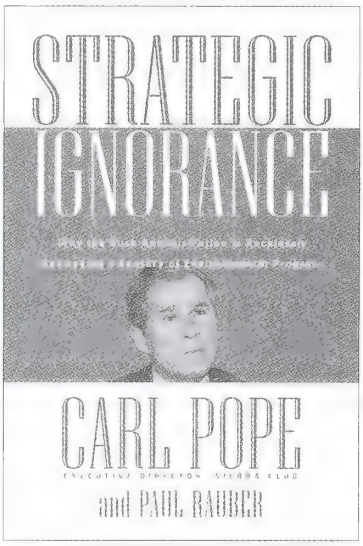
Contradictions are not lies: they are nonsense, unreason. An axis of evil made up of countries that cannot be connected along any imaginable axis is a nonsense statement. A constitutional amendment banning marriage between people of the same gender would pit one part of the Constitution against several others—more nonsense. And when a State of the Union speech has for its peroration the problem of athletes using steroids, nonsense appears to be the preoccupation of the state.

A government would collapse if it spoke nothing but nonsense. Under George W. Bush the government has learned to speak on two levels at the same time. What appears to be nonsense to most people makes perfect sense to those who are initiated into a way of thinking and a certain set of references, many of them biblical. From the constant use of the word "evil" to subtle references to the Book of Revelation, the favorite text of end-

*The Straussians who advise the Bush Administration have been described as a cabal. Given the results of their combined advice on Iraq, among other things, they would be better described as a ship of fools. Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle head the list. Here are a few more who have served the government: Leon Kass, director of the President's Council on Bioethics; Francis Fukuyama, member of the bioethics council and author of* The End of History and the Last Man; *Gary Schmitt, executive director of the Project for the New American Century; Alan Keyes, former assistant secretary of state; Douglas Feith, undersecretary of defense for policy; Stephen A. Cambone, undersecretary of defense for intelligence; Abraham Shulsky, Defense Department Office of Special Plans; Irving Kristol and William Kristol, journalists and neoconservative entrepreneurs—the father was an adviser to the Reagan Administration, and the son was Dan Quayle's chief of staff.*


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time [illegible] Paul's [illegible] ried an esoteric mes

In the art [illegible] thing close to plain English, [illegible] vised his readers [illegible] English, [illegible] vice. Convoluted, contra[illegible] cane, clubfooted writing was his game. He [illegible] dark corners of exposition, making it all [illegible] the history of the English language there had never been a man—not merely a man, a professor at a great university—who so publicly opposed clarity and so brilliantly demonstrated his talent for obfuscation. In his chosen field he was a giant.

Bad writing, unintelligible, contradictory writing, and systematic lying raises a moral question, as Strauss well knew. He ascribed his advocacy of bad writing, which he called "esoteric writing," to the possibility that a writer could be persecuted for what he said. If the writer lives in danger of death or imprisonment because of speaking his ideas clearly, to write as if in a code addressed to a small coterie of followers is not unreasonable. Strauss based his argument on the work of Moses Maimonides, a Jewish physician and philosopher of twelfth-century Spain. Maimonides's *Guide of the Perplexed* was addressed to one of his students, himself a highly educated man. In the preface to the book, Maimonides clearly divided the world into those who could read the complex ideas of philosophy and those who could not. On the surface the *Guide* could be read for its interpretations of Scripture and its ethical prescriptions. But Maimonides said that a reader would have to be conversant with many philosophers and other commentaries on Scripture to fully understand the work. The same might be said of an essay by William Gass or a sermon by John Donne. Strauss argued that the *Guide* contained a secret teaching, a metaphysics contrary in some respects to the literal teachings of the Bible, that must be concealed from the masses, who would be unable to [illegible] tutes. Such knowledge might turn the masses away from religion; such knowledge was necessarily dangerous. [illegible] Maimonides and applied it not to commentary about metaphors and other difficult passages in the Bible but to contemporary political philosophy. He became midwife to the method of the American right.

Strauss claimed that clarity in a philosopher's work endangered both the philosopher and the world. Perhaps. Although he was born in Germany, Leo Strauss wrote all but one of his books in England and the United States, and he was not a homosexual, a Communist, or a person of color. Who would drag him out of his bed in the middle of the night to accuse him of adoring Plato or snuggling up to Aristotle? Who would put his small body on the rack to force a confession for the crime of promoting bad writing? Philosophers are not endangered in America, but if by philosophers we mean Straussians, especially those in government, the world may very well be in danger from philosophers.

### WISE MEN TELL NOBLE LIES

The President of the United States told the world that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. His secretaries of defense and state made the same assertions. They claimed to be telling the kind of truth that enables good countries to go to war against evil ones. Secretary Powell showed drawings of mobile biological-weapons factories to the United Nations Security Council, and America went to war. From time to time after the occupation of Iraq was complete, the reason for going to war changed, for there were no weapons of mass destruction. Only a miserable dictator and the remains of a once prosperous country were found. As a result of the war the Iraqi people went from fear to fear and anger. The administration no longer spoke of weapons of mass destruction but of a terrible dictator deposed, the sweet flower of freedom planted in Babylonian soil.

One of the great services that Strauss and his disciples have performed for the Bush regime has been the provision of a philosophy of the noble lie, the conviction that lies, [illegible] from being simply a regrettable [illegible] cessity of political life, are instead v[illegible] tuous and noble instruments of wi[illegible] policy. The idea's provenance cou[illegible] not be more elevated: Plato hims[illegible] advised his nobles, men with gold[illegible] souls, to tell noble lies—political l[illegible] bles, much like the specter of Sa[illegible] dam Hussein with a nuclear bomb[illegible] to keep the other levels of huma[illegible] society (silver, iron, brass) in the[illegible] proper places, loyal to the state a[illegible] willing to do its bidding. Strauss, t[illegible] advised the telling of noble lies in t[illegible] service of the national interest, and [illegible] held Plato's view of aristocrats as pe[illegible] sons so virtuous that such lies wou[illegible] be used only for the good, for keepi[illegible] order in the state and in the world. H[illegible] defined the modern method of t[illegible] noble lie in the use of esoteric me[illegible] sages within an exoteric text, telli[illegible] the truth to the wise while at the sa[illegible] time conveying something quite d[illegible] ferent to the many.

For Strauss, as for Plato, the virt[illegible] of the lie depends on who is doing t[illegible] lying. If a poor woman lies on her a[illegible] plication for welfare benefits, the l[illegible] cannot be countenanced. The woma[illegible] has committed fraud and must be pu[illegible] ished. The woman is not noble, ther[illegible] fore the lie cannot be noble. Whe[illegible] the leader of the free world says th[illegible] "free nations do not have weapons [illegible] mass destruction," this is but a nob[illegible] lie, a fable told by the aristocratic pre[illegible] ident of a country with enough n[illegible] clear weapons to leave the earth [illegible] desert less welcoming than the surfa[illegible] of the moon.

### ALL MEN ARE NOT CREATED EQUA

William Kristol has written th[illegible] "Strauss, chiefly by way of his student[illegible] is in large part responsible for mal[illegible] ing the thought and principles [illegible] America's founders a source of poli[illegible] ical knowledge and appeal, and f[illegible] making political excellence mo[illegible] broadly a subject of appreciation an[illegible] study." America's founders thought [illegible] self-evident that all men are creat[illegible] equal, and yet increasing inequali[illegible] has been the hallmark of the Bus[illegible] Administration, as it was of the Re[illegible] gan and Clinton administration[illegible] Donald Rumsfeld's primary task und[illegible] Ronald Reagan was to rid the countr[illegible]

he Great Society programs of the
ly 1960s. Irving Kristol, an early
aussian, advised Reagan and Rums-
l and their staffs of the need to stop
dling hungry children, educating
poor, and helping the aged, the
rm, victims of prejudice. The cur-
t Bush Administration works more
dly toward inequality. It has adopt-
a tax system suggested by Grover
rquist, another Straussian, a man
o publicly compared the inheri-
ce tax to the Holocaust.

Robert Maynard Hutchins, the
nder of the Great Books program,
d, "The best education for the
t is the best education for all." In
59, Strauss wrote that "Liberal ed-
tion is the necessary endeavor to
nd an aristocracy within demo-
tic mass society." In one sentence
had stated his elitism and his dis-
te for what he called the vulgarity
democratic society. Three years
er he made the ruling elite perma-
nt: "We must not expect that lib-
l education can ever become uni-
rsal education. It will always
nain the obligation and the privi-
e of a minority." Arrogance fol-
vs elitism. It leads to cruelty, the
ability, perhaps even the desire,
use people, to make them into
ngs. No follower of Strauss can
ee with Kant's description of hu-
n dignity: man is not a means but
end in himself. The Straussians
ign dignity to the few, and those
o are deprived of dignity cannot
rsue happiness. The study of
auss's work does lead to thinking
out the Founders: not how they
uld agree with the Straussians but
w they would oppose them.

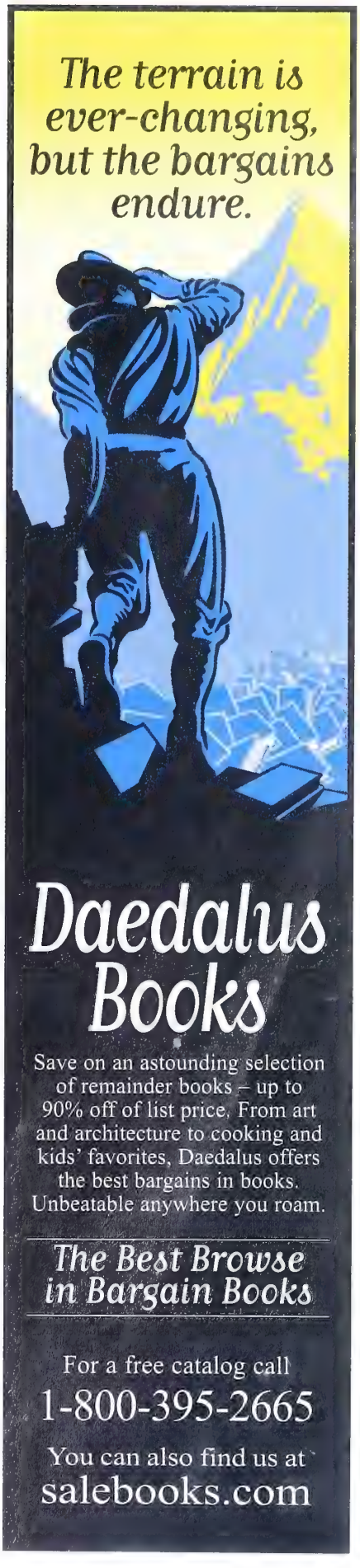
### MOCRACY IS THE RULE OF THE WISE OVER THE WISE

Plato believed that the wise should
e—and who could quarrel with that?
it who then decides among compet-
g wise men, and what should be the
nits of the wise statesman's power? It
instructive to listen to Strauss: "It
uld be absurd to hamper the free
w of wisdom by any regulations;
nce the rule of the wise must be ab-
lute rule. It would be equally absurd
hamper the free flow of wisdom by
nsideration of the unwise wishes of
e unwise; hence the wise rulers ought
not to be responsible to the unwise
subjects." Strauss explains that this
would result in the subjection of what
is by nature higher to that which is
lower. His reading of Plato comes down
to this: true democracy is an act against
nature and must be prevented at all
costs. Seen in this light, the Bush Ad-
ministration's public claim to be bring-
ing "democracy" to Iraq, all the while
working to ensure that elections do not
take place, takes on new meaning.

### NATURE ABHORS A CONTRACT

Long before the events of Septem-
ber 11, 2001, the Bush Administra-
tion—goaded on by Wolfowitz, Kris-
tol, the American Enterprise Institute,
the Project for the New American
Century, and others on the right—
had made a decision to oust Saddam
Hussein. Bush seems to have had a
personal vendetta, but the others had
more philosophical reasons. There was
nothing Machiavellian about the at-
tack. It was based on principles the
planners derived from natural law. One
suspects that President Bush, with his
simplistic messianic mind-set, was at-
tracted to this line of reasoning: The
natural law in the very hearts of human
beings, the innate ability to know right
from wrong, took precedence over
mere convention. And so the Bush
regime violated the contract that was
agreed to when the United States
joined the United Nations; it flouted
the U.S. Constitution, which is also a
contract, by attacking without the re-
quired declaration of war by the Con-
gress; and it disregarded the Geneva
Conventions in its treatment of pris-
oners at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and
in other secret detention camps around
the world.

The administration's wise men held
up Strauss's version of natural law as
the model, dismissing contracts as mere
laws of men. Natural law, interpreted
by Bush's "wise counsels," gave the
President permission to launch a pre-
emptive war through an appeal to the
higher power. Natural-law theory as-
sumes that men seek the good and that
by asking the perennial questions—
what is virtue? what is justice?—they
will come to wisdom. Straussians, like
Kristol, hold that the Founding Fa-
thers espoused natural-law theory, say-
ing that natural law was both divine

and self-evident. But the Founders were concerned with maliciously natural rights. After much debate in their convention, they wrote a contract.

### ATHENS LOST

In the U.S. Senate [illegible] lost out in argument to his warlike counterpart, Powell slowly lost power within the administration to the Department of Defense. A good soldier, he presented lies to the Security Council as if they were certainty. Philosophy won out over politics. There was no cabal, no secret agreement made in the dark of night; none was necessary: the faction that favored preemptive war had principle for a guide.

Athens, the democracy, weakened by plague, suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of oligarchic Sparta and its allies. Strauss, following Plato, did not grieve for the loss of Athens; the real city had been no match for the ideal city. In his view, the active life of the citizen of Periclean Athens suffered by comparison with the contemplative life of the philosopher. The Straussians in the Department of Defense and in the think tanks took this to mean that they could kill on principle. And they did. The first Bush sent his Spartan general to Iraq, and the second sent the same Spartan to the Security Council. The Straussians could not call their work politics, so they called it virtue. They did not take note of the sentence the long dead professor had written that clearly opposed preemptive war. The convenient thing about natural-law theory, as opposed to convention, is that you can simply make it up as you go along.

### THE BEST FRIEND IS AN ENEMY

Strauss despised the Weimar Republic for its weakness in allowing the rise of Hitler. He thought the Russians who had permitted the Marxist-Leninist takeover were equally weak and despicable. The Nazis and Stalinists had driven him out of his home, had murdered his fellow Jews. He feared the Marxists would take over the world. He said that Marxists, socialists, and what we now call liberals aimed toward the same goal. Only strength could withstand the onslaught of these ominous forces, and the only way for a liberal democracy to remain strong was to have external enemies. Strauss provided a rationale for the will to power, the only means left of maintaining the pursuit of virtue by noble men. The Straussian rightists took in his reading of the history of philosophy, manipulated it to fit their own version of history, and went to work. They began just after the Cold War and soon focused on their former ally, Saddam Hussein, who provided an opportunity for testing Albert Wohlstetter's ideas about smart bombs and precision targeting. As the rockets fell on Baghdad, the two old professors had joined forces at last.

### THE STUDY OF HISTORY IS THE ROAD TO PERDITION

Historical events as such had little to do with the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Wise men advised the President to do what he thought was right. Bush consulted with heaven, not with events on earth, and heaven, as he often said in the esoteric part of his speeches, told him what to do. That Richard Perle and William Kristol were his prophets and the Christian right his congregation was our American misfortune. The misreading of the events of 9/11 led to an attack on the wrong enemy for no other reason than the presumed need of a clearly defined enemy to make our liberal democracy strong. This triumph of principle over history initiated a series of contingent events, not only in the Middle East but also in large parts of Asia, that may not be resolved for decades.

Strauss, buffeted by history in his own life, railed against historicism, which holds that meaning can only arise from within a particular historical context. The Straussians contend that historicism leads to relativism and thus to nihilism, finally to the crisis that could bring about the destruction of the American liberal democracy—a crisis, as Strauss himself said, that comes of the loss of the American sense of superiority.

### AFTER ONE COMES NONE

During his lifetime Strauss had a great intellectual antagonist, Sir Isaiah Berlin. They represented the polar opposites of political philosophy, the one and the many, the idealist conservative and the pluralist liberal. To Berlin there was no one true answer to any of the great questions of political philosophy, and if there were true answers we might well never know them. He saw political philosophy, which he described as ethics applied to society, as an attempt to negotiate conflicts among the virtues, none more clear than the conflict between liberty and equality. The Oxford don put it with remarkable clarity: "Liberty for wolves is death to the lambs." The principle of equality must limit the liberty of the strong if the weak are to be fed and clothed. Berlin agreed with Hegel that the essence of freedom was to be at home in one's own culture. He carefully drew the distinction between relativism and pluralism: "'I prefer coffee, you prefer champagne. We have different tastes. There is no more to be said.' That is relativism." Pluralism, he wrote, is "the conception that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully rational, fully men, capable of understanding each other and sympathizing and deriving light from each other, as we derive it from reading Plato or the novels of medieval Japan."

The pluralist wrote, "Ends, moral principles, are many. But not infinitely many: they must be within the human horizon." Strauss had a far narrower horizon, and he believed that there must necessarily be no more than one true and unchanging answer to each of the perennial questions. Nature willed it so. Nature willed everything, even the superiority of the capitalist West over all the rest of the world. The crisis of our time is the failure of the West to believe in its own superiority.

### THE ANSWER TO THE HUMAN QUESTION IS TO AVOID IT

The Bush Administration has made no credible effort to make peace between Jews and Arabs. It embraces Israel on principle, for Bush is a reader of the Book of Revelation and he believes that Christ will not come again until the Jews have been gathered in the Holy Land and either converted or destroyed. Here Strauss

and the President no doubt dif- the wise men merely tolerate r religious allies as the atheist ss tolerated religious Jews.

rauss saw the human question nplified in the Jewish question. he believed it had no resolution, he answer to the Jewish question assimilation, unless the Jews had d of their own—and with a land eir own they would be assimilat- nto the society of nations. The sh problem, like the human prob- was insoluble. He offered no ex- ic answer. On this subject he ed Gershom Scholem's work on Kabbalah, sounding more literary philosophical, much like Jorge Borges. He spoke of what could be known, the mystery of the ph, the first letter of the Ten mandments. Had he become a balist, wrapped in the mystery of lation? I think not. Straussians e a plan: to usurp the power of lation in the service of their idea ason.

**BE A NIETZSCHEAN IT IS NOT ESSARY TO READ NIETZSCHE**

the mind of George Bush, the ient problem of the conflict be- en faith and reason found resolu- . He learned the comforting char- r of power. In itself power poses danger to the country or to the ld. Power can be used in construc- or destructive ways, and it can be timate or not depending upon its ins. Faith, however, has a poor rd in the exercise of power, and the temptation of the perennial prob- s has not done much better. The h regime relies on faith when it and reason when it must, not in cause of peace or justice but in the suit of power. In its use of violence secrecy, the stick and the lie, it no end in mind but power.

The present American govern- nt follows Wohlstetter's last logic Strauss's esoteric morality. Judg- from the number of quotations references to the philosopher in ir writings, the Straussian world- w appears to have come straight n Plato. But the legacy of Strauss better with the ideas of Friedrich tzsche. This may seem curious, ause Strauss blamed "the second crisis of modernity" (the crisis of our time) on the author of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

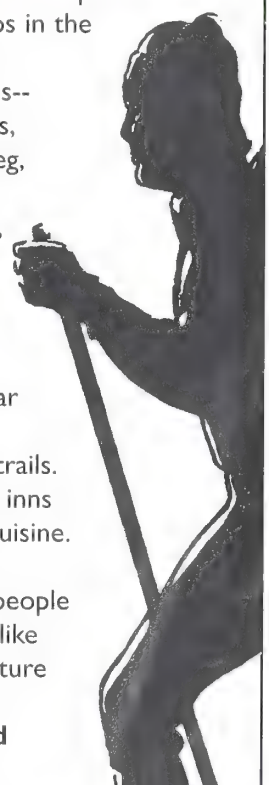
When Strauss wrote about Nietzsche he used the word "public" again and again, perhaps betraying something close to envy. Nietzsche had found the style and the daring to say what lay in the depths of Strauss's soul. Nietzsche's aphoristic love letters to power were the image of Strauss revealed in the aesthetic mirror. Nietzsche ensnared the timid professor who passed on the ideas to his disciples, who whispered them into the all too willing ears of our politicians. Straussian thinking agrees with Nietzsche on historicism and trumpets the master-morality over the slave-morality. The Bush Administration has progressed from Nietzsche's "death of God" to something more subtle, esoteric: the *use* of God.

No one more than Strauss (and now his followers) has greater contempt for the weakness of humility or puts more credence in the arrogance of the superman. The Straussians say the greatest danger to the United States comes not only from weakness in the face of enemies but also from the failure to believe in its own superiority. It is a theoretical problem, they say. The alternative to superiority is the end of ideals, a descent into the comforts of mere being. Nietzsche called the feckless creature who cares for nothing more than preservation of his own skin, wishing only comfort and universal equality, "the last man." It was his warning to the world. The only alternative to the last man is the will to power, which Nietzsche said is the will to life itself, the will to overcome, to control, to be master of all things. This is the will of the Bush Administration.

History belongs, Nietzsche wrote, to "the man who fights one great battle," the man who looks to the past only in order to find exemplars, other great figures who attempted to shape the clay of humanity for a "higher purpose." History is filled with such figures, and with nations that to their sorrow put their faith in them. Most of us will not affect history in the role of great men, but in a society administered by men with Nietzschean dreams of power, our task is clear: We must resist. ■


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# A WICK

## ATMs and the neo-fe

In the garbage can beside the Automated Teller Machine at 7109 South Jeffrey Boulevard on Chicago's South Side, one will find a preponderance of receipts like this one, recording a $20 withdrawal—the minimum allowed—at a $2.00 fee, i.e., a rate of 10 percent. For a resident in wealthy Lincoln Park, fourteen miles north, who withdraws $200 from an ATM with the same fee, the rate drops to a far more palatable 1 percent. This disparity is universally known but seldom discussed; we Americans seem to have accepted that it is dramatically more expensive for poor people to use cash. Although one might imagine that the disbursement of currency would be a matter of public policy, today our nation has left it, as with so many other vital functions, to the whim of the marketplace. And yet the ATM fee, seemingly an exponent of twenty-first-century technology and commerce, in fact has given our monetary system a decidedly archaic turn.



"$" connotes, for us, a single currency, backed by the full force of our government. But we should remember that only since the beginning of the modern era has the task and expense of producing and circulating currency fallen solely to nation-states. Prior to this in Europe, getting cash was often a private affair. At "feudal mints" in the Middle Ages and later at locally "patented" mints, citizens were charged a percentage fee, called "seigniorage," for the assaying and imprinting of gold and silver. But eventually, private seigniorage was outlawed as an encumbrance on the economy. Denounced as "robbers' dens" in official proclamations, private mints were recognized as effectively being a private tax on cash transactions. Jonathan Swift, writing of an Irish private currency in 1724, called it "A WICKED CHEAT" and argued, on economic grounds, for its rejection.

The corner ATM is, in effect, a reincarnation of the private mint; the "owner fee" is the seigniorage charged for stamping one's virtual gold into the circulating medium of the physical world. Such fees burden the economy of the twenty-first century just as they did that of the sixteenth, except today they are far more widespread. In 1996, America had 140,000 ATMs, only a third of which charged fees to anyone. Today that number has grown to 371,000—or nearly five times the number of bank offices—with 89 percent charging fees to at least some users. Even worse, faced with ATM fees, plus the minimum-balance surcharges and overdraft penalties associated with having a bank account to begin with, many poor Americans have chosen instead to pay seigniorage to another type of private mint: the nation's check-cashing agencies, which generally extract fees of $5 per paycheck—or up to 1 to 6 percent of a check's face value.

# CHEAT

## y, *by Gustav Peebles*

As well-off customers, seeking to avoid ATM fees, flee to more prevalent networks—such as Bank One's, the fifth largest in the country—the nation's community banks, which tend to charge far less in account fees and thereby allow poorer customers to bank there, are fast disappearing. Today some 12 million U.S. families cannot afford even a simple checking account, which, for those who cannot maintain a minimum balance, costs on average $228 dollars per year. In the nineteenth century, bankers and governments convinced the people to "draw the money out of the mattresses" (where it had been hidden for much of human history) and into the banks with a promise that the money would grow, or at least keep pace with inflation. This win-win covenant was a virtuous circle that helped to build the capitalist system. Now this covenant has, for many, been perverted, in that it is more expensive to keep their money in the bank than out of it.

Slowly, the cash withdrawal is becoming less preferred as a prelude to purchasing; today almost a third of transactions are made with credit or debit cards, up from 19 percent in 1990. Credit and debit cards, because they are neither accepted by all merchants nor available to all consumers, are in a sense a separate currency, pegged to cash but distinct from it. Anthropologists who have studied societies with multiple currencies almost always have found that one becomes privileged, with some people never gaining access to it. Someday, perhaps, our high-end restaurants will refuse cash—as, for example, many FedEx locations already do—thus assuring a more exclusive, credit-toting clientele. At the very least, it is not far-fetched to imagine that the number of ATMs may begin to decline, in a pattern that mimics the rise and fall of pay phones: initially available only in rich neighborhoods, ATMs may soon be found only in poor ones, as only people without access to credit bother with the tawdry greenback.

The ATM fee, frankly, should be dispensed with, for it is not a necessary component of a healthy economy. A visit to Europe can attest to this: it is cheaper to use an American ATM card in England or Denmark than to use that same card at most ATMs in the United States itself. Access to cash is not a market-organized choice but is, for poorer Americans, at least, a daily necessity. The unequal burden of ATM fees represents a retreat—one of many, in recent decades—from the modern ideal of social equality, which developed, it should be noted, at the same time we abandoned private mints in the first place. Today's legislators should see such extortionate systems of currency circulation just as critics of a previous era saw them: as embarrassing indices of a feudalist economy, which thrives on the unsubtle and unjust transfer of wealth from the poorer to the wealthier classes.

*ebles is a postdoctoral fellow in gy at Columbia University.*

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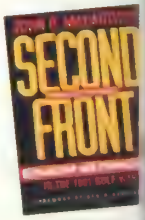
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# BRIEFINGS

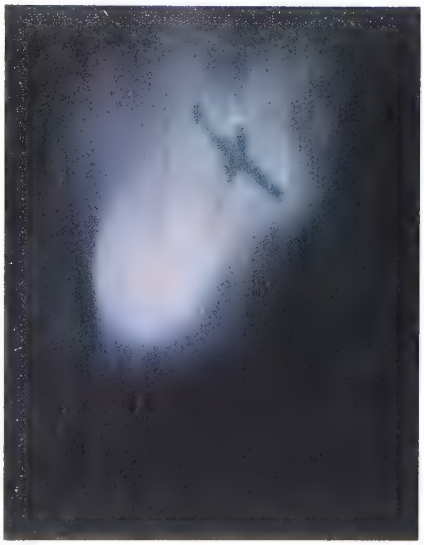
*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## ISSING N IRAQ

***e United States has not found Scott eicher either***

On September 12, 2002, George W. Bush made his case for war before the General Assembly the United Nations, telling the rld's representatives that their coun- s faced dire threats from escalating ional conflicts, terrorist cells, and law regimes. Governments with "no of morality" possessed "the tech- logies to kill on a massive scale." But ly Iraq, assured the President, har- ed "all these dangers, in their most hal and aggressive forms." Saddam ssein had repeatedly defied U.N. curity Council resolutions, including 991 ruling demanding "that Iraq re- n all prisoners from Kuwait and oth- lands." According to Bush, more an 600 nationals from at least ten ferent countries remained unac- unted for in Iraq. "One American ot is among them."

The American pilot was Lieutenant mmander Scott Speicher, the first S. casualty of Operation Desert orm. On January 17, 1991, during e war's first night of combat, Scott eicher's F/A-18 Hornet fighter was by an Iraqi air-to-air missile over the sert west of Baghdad. Speicher nev- activated his rescue beacon, and ere were no sightings of his ejection parachute. "Airplane disintegrated impact, no contact with pilot," read Navy report. When the war ended, ott Speicher was officially declared led in action. And for ten years he nained K.I.A., until January 2001, nen the secretary of the Navy—spurred on by Senator Pat Roberts, a Republican from Kansas and an unremitting advocate for deposing Saddam—changed Speicher's status to missing in action. It was the first time the Pentagon had made such a reversal. An unclassified U.S. intelligence report made public in March 2002 stated that "Speicher probably survived



the loss of his aircraft, and if he survived, he almost certainly was captured by the Iraqis." On October 11, the day after both houses of Congress authorized military force in Iraq, Speicher's status was changed again. Navy Secretary Gordon England ruled that the pilot—who since his disappearance had been promoted twice, to the rank of captain—be reclassified to the "more appropriate" missing/captured, making Scott Speicher, almost twelve years after he was shot down, a prisoner of war.

Alongside arguments about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, Scott Speicher offered Americans a human and less abstract rationale for war. In the six months leading to war, there were at least 135 news stories about Speicher, speculating about his fate and the character of those who would keep him prisoner. In March 2002 the *Washington Times* ran a front-page article on Speicher for five consecutive days. One was titled "Bush denounces 'heartless' Saddam; He suspects Navy pilot is a live captive," and another cited an informant inside Iraq who "stated that the pilot was being kept in isolation." CNN's Wolf Blitzer called Speicher's situation "shocking," and on MSNBC a former Pentagon official discussed the likelihood that the pilot was being tortured. When asked about the hypothetical treatment of the Navy pilot, President Bush said, "It reminds me once again about the nature of Saddam Hussein." In this manner, Speicher's case became an argument for the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Only a monster and a war criminal would hold a prisoner incommunicado for eleven years; and, so the syllogism went, surely such a monster and war criminal would acquire and deploy unconventional weapons.

I first heard of Scott Speicher the day after his plane was lost, while sitting at my basement desk in the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Defense, which then housed the Operation Desert Storm command center. During the Gulf War, I was a battle-damage assessment officer on General Norman Schwarzkopf's intelligence staff; it was my job to analyze reports of Iraqi casualties and equipment losses. Among the documents detailing the first night of battle, I saw a reference to the

*ht Flight*, by Joy Garnett. Courtesy Debs & Co., New York.

downing of Speicher's plane. Initial accounts were sparse, but over the next weeks we learned enough to determine that Lieutenant Commander Speicher had not survived the crash. Fellow pilots reported having seen the plane blow apart and explode in a ball of fire. There was no evidence to suggest that Speicher had ejected from his plane or outlived the direct hit.

The first intimation that Speicher might have survived came in early 1993, when the CIA learned that pieces of a U.S. Navy F/A-18 were being sold on the black market in the Middle East. In December a small party of CIA-sponsored Qatari operatives, in Iraq to hunt exotic game, managed to locate wreckage from Speicher's aircraft roughly 100 miles inside Iraq, northeast of the Saudi border town of Ar'ar. It seemed the jet had not "disintegrated," as was previously believed, raising the possibility, however slight, that the pilot was alive.

The Speicher crash site eventually was investigated in December 1995. A group of inspectors from the Defense Department and the International Committee of the Red Cross discovered sections of the plane intact and were unable to find evidence of human remains or the plane's cockpit—all of which left open the possibility that Speicher had ejected from the plane and lived. The most curious find was a solitary flight suit, in relatively good condition, lying in the sand some distance from the wreckage. But this inspection team also determined that Speicher, prior to an ejection, would have been exposed to flames of up to 700 degrees Fahrenheit for at least three seconds; an oxygen mask fails at 400 degrees. The Pentagon's Kenneth Bacon said after the investigation, "Nothing the team found indicates that the pilot survived the crash."

In December 1997, I was a weapons inspector for the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), in which capacity I would oversee fifty-four searches in Iraq over seven years. That month a member of my inspection team, a retired Delta Force intelligence operative who continued to do covert work for the Pentagon, requested that I add a site to my inspection list. He wanted to search the Hakmiya prison, known as the "Baghdad Hilton" to the U.S. pilots held captive there during Desert Storm and a possible home at some time to Scott Speicher. (I learned from the retired operative that in the summer of 1995 there had also been a similar plan, known then as the "Ritter option," to embed Delta Force personnel in my UNSCOM team; I, wittingly or not, would have led them to the Speicher crash site.) Although I was reluctant at first, eventually I cooperated with the former Delta Force operative, and the inspection of the Hakmiya prison went smoothly. I found no evidence of WMD activity; he uncovered no new information on Scott Speicher.

My only other direct involvement with the Speicher case occurred in March 2002, when the Iraqi government announced that it would allow a U.S. delegation to travel within Iraq to conduct a full investigation into Speicher's status. To my surprise, the Iraqis requested that I be involved. Within two days a senior staffer for Pat Roberts called to say the senator would like to talk to me. I had resigned from UNSCOM in 1998, frustrated with the United States for failing to support the work of the weapons inspectors, but I flew to Washington to meet with Senator Roberts, who had expressed interest in going to Baghdad himself to take part in the search. Later I traveled to New York to meet with Naji Sabri, the Iraqi foreign minister. Eventually Roberts' trip was deemed politically unacceptable both to the White House and to Roberts himself, and the plan was scrapped.

When Operation Iraqi Freedom ended and the United States assumed power in Iraq, the Bush Administration ordered a thorough search of the country in an effort to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction, Saddam's links to Al Qaeda, and the fate of Captain Speicher. The Pentagon formed a special "Speicher team," which was composed of military personnel based at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington and a unit working on the ground in Iraq. In the weeks after the fall of Baghdad, the Speicher team investigated the Hakmiya prison, where the indistinct initials "MSS" were found carved into a cell wall. To those who continued to believe the Bush Administration's prewar assurances, the initials stood for Michael Scott Speicher, the pilot's full name. But to the more dubious, the initials meant nothing: a similar carving of "MJN" was found directly above the "MSS" scrawl.

In June the Speicher team interviewed Ahmad Sadiq, a former Iraqi Air Force general. At a debriefing facility in Baghdad's Green Zone, where the United States now directs many of its operations, Sadiq said he knew the Iraqi pilot who shot down Speicher's plane in 1991. He also said he had worked closely with Brigadier General al Salwan Jameel al-Hadithi, the Iraqi Air Force intelligence officer responsible for the investigations of all downed Coalition pilots. Between 1991 and 2002, Sadiq and Hadithi had prepared, at the request of Saddam Hussein, a thorough report on the current status of every pilot shot down and captured during Desert Storm. When the Speicher team acquired the ninety-page document, they found that it contained only one line on Speicher: "Unknown, no information available on the fate of the pilot." A report issued internally, meant to be comprehensive, and demanded by Saddam himself—to many, this more than anything proved that Iraq knew nothing of Speicher's fate.

The 2002 decision to change Speicher's designation from M.I.A. to P.O.W., U.S. officials said, had been based primarily on new testimony from a "credible" Iraqi defector. The defector, known as 2314, had revealed to his interlocutors that only a handful of Iraqis aside from himself knew of Speicher's imprisonment, including Saddam Hussein and his

Qusay. Defector 2314 had
med to be a captain in the Spe-
Security Organization (SSO), a
onal assistant to the group's di-
or, and privy to the most confi-
tial government secrets. In fact,
4 was really Eduard, an Iraqi
istian who, the Speicher team
ned, merely waited tables at the
dquarters of the SSO. At most,
ad served the director drinks and
d. When the SSO director was
en into custody in April 2003 he
ified that Eduard was a "born liar"
knew nothing about the fate of
tt Speicher. Hadithi, the former
elligence officer in charge of
icher's case, told the Speicher
n the same. In several meetings
n the U.S. officers, including a fi-
seven-hour marathon session
ducted in early March 2004 in
ch he confronted Eduard directly,
dithi helped convince the Speich-
eam that the defector was a fraud.
Pentagon report concluded,
one of the information provided
2314 has proven accurate."

t has been more than a year
since President Bush declared
victory in Iraq, and neither
apons of mass destruction nor,
ly, Scott Speicher has been dis-
vered there. The changes in
icher's status raised the hopes of
family, his fellow pilots, and an
erican public that believed no
lier should ever be left behind.
t the evidence on which these
es were based was threadbare,
pect, and often contradictory.
e the decade-long search for Iraq's
sive chemical and biological arse-
, the search for Scott Speicher
s based on faulty and selectively
erpreted intelligence, and on po-
cal aims masquerading as fact.
The Speicher team, having found
evidence that the Iraqis had lied
out the Navy pilot, is currently
apping up its investigation and
l probably, according to a Defense
elligence Agency representative,
ie its final report in the upcoming
eks. The team has no reason to be-
ve that Speicher had ever been
taken into Iraqi custody; if he had managed to eject from his plane he most likely perished soon afterward. These conclusions were corroborated by none other than Saddam Hussein after his capture last December. Asked if he knew the location of Scott Speicher, the former Iraqi dictator said, "No, we have never kept any prisoners. I have never known what happened."

*—Scott Ritter*

## NOT A PRAYER

***Then as now, American schemes to change Islam have been dangerous folly***

Among the neoconservative thinkers who hold sway in the present administration, one current *idée fixe* is the dream not merely of eradicating Islamic terrorism but



of transforming Islam itself. In April, Daniel Pipes—who, as director of the right-wing Middle East Forum, is known largely for his unstinting defense of Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon—announced plans for a new organization, the Islamic Progress Institute (IPI), which will "articulate a moderate, modern and pro-American viewpoint" and thereby "go head-to-head with the established Islamist institutions" in the United States and overseas. The "ultimate goal" of the war on terrorism is, as Pipes sees it, the modernization of Islam, or what he calls "religion-building." According to a grant proposal by Pipes and two New York foundations, the IPI will direct its message primarily at "substantial numbers of alienated Muslims" in the United States for whom "having a moderate organization would be a good influence and will help moderate their views."

Pipes's aim of conjuring an America-friendly brand of Islam is shared by many of his ideological brethren, including some who wield more clout inside the White House than he. In January 2003, as the administration was pleading its case for war, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz remarked to the *Washington Post:* "We need an Islamic reformation, and I think there is real hope for one." And in their manifesto *An End to Evil,* former Bush Administration officials David Frum and Richard Perle write, "We urgently need an American Islam that feels at home on American soil, that is committed to American values and the defense of the American nation." They add, hopefully: "If you listen carefully, you can hear that American Islam struggling to be born. . . . Who knows but that the force that ultimately defeats and destroys militant Islam may not turn out to be a democratic Islam born in the United States?"

This is not the first time that U.S. policymakers have hoped to mold Islam to suit American interests. Fifty years ago, Central Intelligence Agency strategists endeavored to win Arab hearts and minds by exploiting Islamic piety. In his memoirs the late CIA agent Miles Copeland describes early Cold War shenanigans in Cairo, where American spies "engaged in an operation to show Soviet ungodliness" by circulating anti-Islamic literature—including books with titles like *Mohammed Never Existed* and *The Harmful Consequences of Fasting During Ramadan*—and attributing its distribution to the Soviet embassy.

The fledgling CIA was then on something of a roll, having fomented coups and engineered elections in several countries with few impediments. U.S. cloak-and-dagger operatives believed that Egypt's Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, who seized power in a 1952

*Series (2),* by Joy Garnett. Courtesy Debs & Co., New York City

military putsch, was firmly under Washington's control. When Nasser wanted to overhaul Egypt's antiquated secret-service apparatus, he asked the CIA for assistance. But the U.S. government "found it highly impolitic to help him directly," according to Copeland, so the agency brought in more than a hundred Third Reich veterans—Nazi security and interrogation specialists—to do the job.

Contrary to American expectations, Nasser proved to be neither pliable nor reliable. An ardent Arab nationalist, he spurned U.S. requests to join an anti-Soviet military pact and instead championed a neutralist coalition of nations that would take an independent stance in the Cold War. Non-alignment was anathema to the Dulles brothers—CIA Director Allen and Secretary of State John Foster—and they took a dim view of Nasser's growing stature as a charismatic leader who could galvanize Arabs and Muslims far beyond his own borders. "If that colonel of yours pushes us too far, we will break him in half," Allen Dulles warned Copeland, then the CIA's man in Cairo.

What the CIA really needed, Copeland surmised, was a "religious spellbinder" who could tip the scales of Arab opinion and "divert the growing stream of anti-American hostility." As Copeland explained: "I wanted to find and groom a messiah who would start out in Egypt, and then spread his word to Africans and perhaps other Third World peoples. Our Chosen One [would] immunize them against false prophets," namely Nasser. Copeland knew "from what was happening in America that a religious movement didn't have to make sense in order to attract adherents," as he put it. He was commenting on the sudden transformation of Billy Graham, a former Fuller Brush salesman who had obtained his divinity degree through the mail, into a superstar evangelist during the early 1950s. In a moment of inspiration, Copeland came up with the idea to sponsor "a Moslem Billy Graham."

Copeland visited several Egyptian mosques in search of a preacher who might beguile the Arab masses in a manner conducive to the United States. Although the CIA's messiah was nowhere to be found, Copeland's efforts were not without consequence. In the process, he made overtures to leaders of the Islamic revival movement known as the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen, or Muslim Brotherhood, which promoted a resonant and tenacious strain of Sunni fundamentalism known as Salafism. The seeds of a furtive relationship between the CIA and the *Ikhwan* were planted. In the years ahead, the agency would become a de facto accomplice of the Muslim Brotherhood as it developed into the ideological and organizational wellspring of Islamic terrorism.



"Any contact Miles had with the Muslim Brotherhood was not official policy," insists retired CIA officer Raymond Close, Copeland's colleague in the Middle East. "It was strictly solo work on his part. There were an awful lot of things that Miles did which were totally off the board."

Whether his actions were rogue or sanctioned, Copeland was not the only CIA official to conclude that the Muslim Brothers, by virtue of their opposition to both Communism and pan-Arab nationalism, might serve as a counterweight to Nasser. Founded in 1928 as a social-welfare movement, the fast-growing Brotherhood boasted more than a half-million members by the time Nasser toppled the pro-British monarchy. Although the Brothers initially supported Nasser's power grab, they had a falling-out once it became apparent that Nasser did not intend to establish an Islamic regime. A failed assassination attempt against Nasser in October 1954 gave Egyptian authorities a pretext to ban the *Ikhwan*, to jail and torture thousands of its members, and to kill several of its leaders. Others went underground or fled the country to escape successive waves of brutal persecution.

Many Muslim Brothers took refuge in Saudi Arabia, where they were welcomed by the royal family. The Saudis became the principal patrons of the *Ikhwan*, which set up branches in most Arab states. With the CIA's tacit approval, the Saudi patrimony lavished funds on those Brothers who joined the anti-Nasser insurgency in Yemen in 1962. "Like any other truly effective covert action, this one was strictly off the books," wrote Robert Baer, a nineteen-year veteran of the CIA, in his book *Sleeping with the Devil*. "There was no CIA finding, no memorandum of notification to Congress. Not a penny came out of the Treasury to fund it. In other words, no record." Describing the Brotherhood as a "silent ally" that provided "a cheap no-American casualties way" to do "our dirty work in Yemen, Afghanistan, and plenty of other places," Baer explained: "All the White House had to do was give a wink and a nod to countries harboring the Muslim Brothers."

Exiled members of the *Ikhwan* occupied key positions in Saudi schools, government agencies, and mosques, where they touted the extremist ideology of Sayyid Qutb, the Brotherhood's leading theorist. Executed in 1966 after years of confinement in Nasser's torture chambers, Qutb espoused a lethal variant of political Islam that demanded nothing less than the violent overthrow of the established order. His inflammatory writings swayed a generation of young Islamic militants, including Osama bin Laden.

Flush with Saudi oil money, the Muslim Brothers resurfaced in Egypt after Nasser died in 1970. When his successor

ar Sadat, made amends with Jnited States, he released Is- activists from jail and lifted ctions on the Brotherhood in ıopes of stifling leftist student ps and holdouts from the old ıe. Sadat's dalliance with the ıers elicited more winks from CIA, which was willing to en- ıin almost any scheme that t tar the U.S.S.R. as a foe of Is- (After the 1967 Arab-Israeli according to Baer, the CIA's ık works" unit proposed load- ive pigs onto a captured Soviet port plane and dropping them Mecca.) U.S. policymakers too fixated on the Red Menace asp what was happening on the tian street: the Muslim Broth- od, officially proscribed but semi- ated, was undergoing a fateful morphosis.

hen the Brotherhood re- ıced armed confrontation, hop- o reform the system from with- enegade Brothers formed violent ter groups, based on the belief it was their religious duty to holy war against an apostate tian government. The leaders of breakaway factions—the Islamic ıp of Sheikh Omar Abdel Rah- and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad r. Ayman al-Zawahiri—were im- ıted in the 1981 assassination of ident Sadat. Today, Rahman, a l Egyptian cleric, is serving a life ence in the United States for the 3 plot against the World Trade ter, while al-Zawahiri is Osama Laden's top deputy.

Were one to formulate a general of thumb about how U.S. med- g affects Islam, it would have to adly. Nowhere is this sad reality ter than in Iraq, where our latest opotamian adventure has cat- ed anti-American passions ng Middle Eastern Muslims to a ee not seen since the headiest of Nasser. Once again, we have ısily and preemptively targeted a ılar Arab enemy and, in the ess, have managed to fan the es of Islamic fervor.

—*Martin A. Lee*

# CONTRACT KILLERS

***How privatizing the U.S. military subverts public oversight***

A small group of businessmen now controls the American war machine. The bombers cannot take off, the missiles cannot fly, the warships cannot get under way, the robots cannot do their deadly duty until these men assent. They are the CEOs of a small cluster of private corporations, and they share the power once vested exclusively in the President and Congress—the power to make war or peace. They head companies with names unfamiliar to most of us: Vinnell Corporation; ArmorGroup; DynCorp; L-3 Communications Government Services, Inc. (L-3 GSI) and MPRI, its standalone subsidiary; Logicon Inc., a branch of Northrop Grumman Corp. There are better-known names as well: Booz Allen Hamilton, for example, and the now famous Halliburton with its many subsidiaries, including Kellogg Brown & Root.

Seven hundred thousand or more private employees work in the bowels of the American military machine, and the value of their contracts runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. Approximately 20,000 soldiers fighting on the American side in Iraq—one out of every ten—are hired gunmen Profit-making organizations are now involved at every level of national defense, from intelligence gathering and analysis to the making of operational combat plans. Corporations do the U.S. military's laundry, cook its food, swab its latrines. The fact that such tasks are performed by employees not of the government but of concerns listed on stock exchanges has begun to percolate into the public consciousness. But most Americans still do not understand that their celebrated high-tech, postindustrial military establishment cannot so much as fire a rocket without assistance from private military firms. The extent to which war making has been turned over to these organizations is not well known, and this is because those in charge do not want it known.



The rationale for privatizing American war making is that corporate warriors can do the job for less. But no proof exists that hiring private firms is cheaper. In theory, private contracting creates competitive pressure to reduce costs, but in practice the bidding process can be so opaque and distorted by favoritism that it becomes an empty formality. Many of the large rebuilding contracts in Iraq were made under no-bid or "emergency" conditions. The starkest example of this crony competition is Kellogg Brown & Root's $7 billion contract to restore the Iraqi oil industry. The Army told the *New York Times* last June that KBR was awarded the contract without competition because it was the only company that fulfilled the criteria set out by the Army's "contingency plan." The contingency plan, of course, was written by KBR itself. In the grand tradition pioneered by Boss Tweed, contractor waste abounds. Last year, Halliburton alone was found to have overcharged the military roughly $1 per gallon for tens of millions of gallons of gasoline and $16 million for feeding soldiers at a base in Kuwait.

The Pentagon is subject to the Freedom of Information Act, but its contractors are not. They can act entirely in private, abetted by a Defense Department that blocks inquiries by invoking its obligation to protect the firms' "proprietary information." Not even the salaries paid by these companies are public. The occasional indiscretion

*Vision*, by Joy Garnett. Courtesy Debs & Co., New York City

ington Post's revelation that some [illegible] being paid $1,000 a day. With the [illegible] ter employees killed in Fallujah, the [illegible] solemnly announced like the deaths of those who serve not for money [illegible] among the mercenaries is anyone's [illegible] Times [illegible] that "at least fifty" and possibly more [illegible] since the U.S. invasion.

If the Pentagon's control over the corporate proprietors of these private-enterprise militias is problematic, its control over their men in the field is even more so. Whether they fight for our cause or for their own, they have not taken an oath of allegiance to the United States and its Constitution, nor are they subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. In Iraq, besides former U.S. servicemen with a taste for adventure and money, contractors on the U.S. side have drawn on such sources of manpower as the Nepalese Gurkhas and former South African soldiers. Meanwhile, an April *Washington Post* report noted that recent combat deaths had caused the various private security firms working in the country to pool intelligence, create common, armed rescue teams, and form what the *Post* called "the largest private army in the world."

In recent history, the use of private contractors has reduced the military's accountability with respect to the size of troop deployments overseas. In Bosnia, after Congress imposed a cap of 20,000 on the number of U.S. troops that could be deployed there, the use of 2,000 contractors allowed the military to exceed the cap. The number of U.S. soldiers in Colombia has long been capped at 400, but the hundreds of nonmilitary war personnel hired by DynCorp are not counted under the cap. After Congress limited the number of U.S. civilian contractors, DynCorp circumvented that restriction by hiring ex-servicemen to do the work.

When U.S. firms do business with foreign governments, frequently this serves as an off-the-books program of military aid. Saudi Arabia, Croatia, Haiti, Nigeria, Taiwan, Ukraine, Macedonia, and others have employed American corporate warriors to train their forces. In some cases the training would have been controversial had it been done by the U.S. military itself. In 1995, MPRI, which boasts of having "more generals per square foot than the Pentagon," was hired to revamp the previously ineffectual Croatian army. Weeks later it drove the Serbs out of the Krajina region, a rupture of the cease-fire that violated U.N. strictures and resulted in nearly 200,000 refugees.

Although the U.S. military claims not to involve itself in arrangements between foreign governments and the American firms they contract with, a former Defense Intelligence Agency official told *The Nation* in 1997: "The programs are designed to further our foreign policy objectives.... If the government doesn't sanction it, the companies don't do it."

Today our military entrusts far more, and far more vital, tasks to private contractors than it did even ten years ago. The armed men who protect Paul Bremer, the American viceroy in Baghdad, from assassination are private contractors. The bodyguards who protect Hamid Karzai, the more or less democratically elected president of Afghanistan, come courtesy of DynCorp, under contract with the State Department. (Similar services once were provided by DynCorp for Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, but times change.) The Navy's capital ships and the Stealth bomber are maintained by companies for hire. Services as diverse as weapons testing and aerial refueling of bombers are performed by businesses under contract to the government. Even Global Hawk and Predator, the pilotless airplanes so often sh[illegible] strutting their stuff on televisi[illegible] are operated by a private concern.

War corporations could not be ma[illegible] to go away, even in the unlikely eve[illegible] that the administration desired it. I[illegible] the United States, the era of la[illegible] armies—which began with the le[illegible] en masse of the French Revolution a[illegible] gave rise to forces the size of whi[illegible] had not been seen since Cambyses[illegible] ended in the rice paddies of Vietna[illegible] Not only had it become politically i[illegible] possible to send draftees to fight co[illegible] nial wars, but, like everything else, w[illegible] shifted from being labor-intensive [illegible] being capital-intensive. Always sp[illegible] cialized and technical, it became m[illegible] so. This made war suited, in theo[illegible] to the business-organization model[illegible] decentralization and outsourci[illegible] which would confer the benefits [illegible] speed, flexibility, and low cost.

The financial savings have turn[illegible] out to be highly debatable. T[illegible] costs and attendant risks are n[illegible] The government's monopoly of t[illegible] means of violence—its role as t[illegible] guarantor of civil peace and the r[illegible] of law—has been diluted by the n[illegible] arrangements. At the moment the[illegible] companies are dominated by retir[illegible] officers who have internalized t[illegible] norms of civilian control, but th[illegible] may be merely for the time bei[illegible] After all, the praetorian guard pr[illegible] tected the Roman emperors fo[illegible] long time before it started killi[illegible] them. Brighter lights and strong[illegible] controls need to be placed ov[illegible] these corporations. Either we sup[illegible] vise them or eventually they will s[illegible] pervise us.

—*Nicholas von Hoffm[illegible]*

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*Scott Ritter was a United Nations weap[illegible] inspector from 1991 to 1998.*

*Martin A. Lee, a co-founder of Fairn[illegible] and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), [illegible] the author of* Acid Dreams *and T[illegible]* Beast Reawakens.

*Nicholas von Hoffman, a columnist [illegible] the* New York Observer, *is the auth[illegible] most recently, of* Hoax *(Nation Book[illegible]*

# OFFICERS WEEP

*By Daniel Orozco*

Block, First Street. Parking viola-
. Car blocking driveway. Citation
ed. City Tow notified.

0 Block, Central Boulevard. Pub-
listurbance. Rowdy ju-
iles on interurban bus.
pects flee before offi-
arrive.

Block, Sycamore Cir-
. Barking-dog com-
nt. Attempts to shush
unsuccessful. Citation
in owner's mailbox.
imal Control notified.

)0 Block, Harvest Av-
ıe. Suspicious odor.
meowner returning from
ended trip reports a bad
)r—a gas leak or "the
ell of death." Officers in-
tigate. Odor ascertained
be emanating from a
ghbor's mimosa tree in
seasonal bloom. "The
ell of life," officer [Shield
47] ponders aloud. Officers nod.
meowner rolls eyes, nods politely.

)0 Block, Fairview Avenue. Shady
en Retirement Apartments. Loud-
se complaint. "What kind of noise?"
cers ask. Complainant simply says
vas "a loud report." "A gunshot?"
cers query. "A scream? Explosion?
What?" Complainant becomes adamant, shakes walnut cane in fisted hand: "It was a loud report!" Officers mutter, reach for batons, then relent. Officers report report.



700 Block, Sixth Street. Public disturbance. Kleen-Azza-Whistle Cleaners. Two women in fistfight over snakeskin vest. Each declares ownership of claim ticket found on floor by officers. In an inspired Solomonic moment, officer [Shield #647] waves pair of tailor's shears and proposes cutting vest in half. Approaching the contested garment, he slips its coveted skins between the forged blades. And thus is the true mother revealed!

3600 Block, Sunnyside Drive. Vandalism. Handball courts in Phoenix Park defaced. Spray-paint graffiti depicts intimate congress between a male and a female, a panoramic mural of heterosexual coupling that spans the entire length of the courts' front wall, its every detail rendered with a high degree of clinical accuracy. Officers gape. Minutes pass in slack-jawed silence, until officer [Shield #647] ascertains incipient boner. Officer horrified, desperately reroutes train of thought, briskly repositions his baton. Second officer [Shield #325] takes down Scene Report, feigns unawareness of her partner's tumescent plight, ponders the small blessings of womanhood. Vandalism reported to Parks & Rec Maintenance.

900 Block, Maple Road. Canine-litter violation. Homeowner complains of dog feces on front lawn. Officers investigate, ascertain droppings are fresh, reconnoiter on foot. They walk abreast, eyes asquint and arms akimbo, their hands at rest among the ordnance of their utility belts: radio receiver, pepper spray, ammo pouch, handcuffs, keys and whistles, and change for the meter. Officers jingle like Santas. Their shoulders and hips move with the easy dip and roll of Classic Cop Swagger. "That business back there," she says, "with the snake-

*niel Orozco teaches creative writing at University of Idaho. He is at work on a ection of short stories.*

tration by John Ritter

steaming pile, whereupon poop trail [illegible]ld. Officers terminate search, [illegible] Control.

[illegible]0 Block, Bonny Road. Vehicular burglary. Items stolen from pickup truck: a pair of work boots, a hard-hat, safety goggles, and [illegible] per victim's description—a cherry-red enameled Thaesselhaeffer Sidewinder chain saw, with an 8.5 horsepower, 2-stroke motor in a titanium-alloy housing, a 4-speed trigger clutch with auto-reverse, and the words DADDY'S SWEET BITCH stenciled in flaming orange-yellow letters along the length of its 34-inch saw bar. Victim weeps. Officers take Scene Report, refer victim to Crisis Center.

5600 Block, Fairvale Avenue. Traffic stop. Illegal U-turn. Officer [Shield #325] approaches vehicle. Her stride longer than her legs can accommodate, she leans too much into each step, coming down hard on her heels, as if trudging through sand. As she returns to Patrol Unit, a lock of her hair—thin and drab, a lusterless mousy brown—slips down and swings timidly across her left eye, across the left lens of her mirrored wraparounds. Officer tucks errant lock behind ear, secures it in place with a readjustment of duty cap. Her gestures are brisk and emphatic, as if she were quelling a desire to linger in the touch of her own hair. Officer [Shield #647] observes entire intimate sequence from his position behind wheel of Patrol Unit. Officer enthralled. Officer ascertains the potential encroachment of love, maybe, into his cautious and lonely life. Officer swallows hard.

700 Block, Willow Court. Dogs running loose. Pack of strays reported scavenging in neighborhood, turning [illegible]es. Worried homeowner reports cat [illegible] like cats. "Yes, ma'am," officer [Shield #325] replies. "They are especially flavorful batter-fried." Officers crack up. Levity unappreciated. Officers notify Animal Control, [illegible]

2200 Block, Cherry Orchard W[illegible] Burglary. Three half-gallon cans of chain-saw fuel stolen from open garage.

7800 Block, Frontage Boulevard at Highway 99. Vehicle accident and traffic obstruction. Semi-trailer hydroplanes, overturns, spills cargo of southwestern housewares down Frontage Road West off-ramp. Officers redirect traffic and clear debris: shattered steer skulls; fleshy cactus chunks; the dung-colored shards of indeterminate earthenware; the mangled scrap of copper-plate Kokopellis and dream shamans; and actual, honest-to-God tumbleweeds, rolling along the blacktop. "Tumbleweeds!" officer [Shield #325] exclaims. "Yee-haw!" Roundup commences, and her face gleams with exertion and sheer joy. Her stern little mouth elongates into goofy smile, teeth glinting like beach glass in the sun. As they divert traffic, officer ascertains being observed keenly. The watchful and intimate scrutiny makes her feel, for the first time in a long while, yearned for, desired. Officer [Shield #325] gets all goosebumpy and flustered, and likes it. DPW Units arrive in their orange trucks, unload sundry orange accoutrements, erect signage: CAUT[illegible]N, SLOW, OBSTRUCTION. Officers secure scene until State Patrol arrives, with their state jurisdiction and their shiny boots and their funny hats.

200 Block, Windjammer Court. Tall Ships Estates. Criminal trespass. One-armed solicitor selling magazine subscriptions in gated community. Forty-six-year-old suspect is embarrassed, despondent, angry, blames his bad luck on televi[illegible] "the fucking Internet." Officers suggest cutting fast food some slack, then issue [illegible] to migrate, buy subscriptions to *Firearms Fancier* and *Enforcement Weekly*.

2200 Block, Orange Grove R[illegible] Criminal trespass and vandalis[illegible] Winicki's World of Burlwood. M[illegible] chant returns from lunch to find [illegible] nishings—burlwood dining tab[illegible] and wardrobes and credenzas, bu[illegible] wood salad bowls and CD racks, bu[illegible] wood tie caddies and napkin ri[illegible] and cheese boards—ravaged. Othe[illegible] assess scene, do math: Burlwooc[illegible] Chain Saw = Woodcraft Apocalyp[illegible]

800 Block, Clearvale Street. Poss[illegible] illegal entry. Complainant "sense[illegible] presence" upon returning home fr[illegible] yoga class. Officers investigate, asc[illegible] tain opportunity to practice C[illegible] Swagger, to kick things up a bit. C[illegible] ficer [Shield #325] pulls should[illegible] back, adds inch to height. Offi[illegible] [Shield #647] sucks gut in, pu[illegible] oblique muscle. Search of premi[illegible] yields nothing. "That's okay," co[illegible] plainant says. "It's gone now." O[illegible] cers mutter, blame yoga.

300 Block, Galleon Court. T[illegible] Ships Estates. Criminal trespass a[illegible] public disturbance. One-arm[illegible] magazine salesman kicking doors [illegible] threatening residents. Scuffle ensu[illegible] Officers sit on suspect, call for bac[illegible] up, ponder a cop koan: How do y[illegible] cuff a one-armed man?

2600 Block, Bloom Road. Public d[illegible] turbance. Two men in shouti[illegible] match at Eugene's Tamale Temp[illegible] Customer complains of insect in [illegible] fried beans. Employee claims i[illegible] parsley. Officers investigate. De[illegible] spider ascertained in frijoles. "W[illegible] it's not an insect," officer [Shi[illegible] #325] declares. "Spiders are arac[illegible] nids, you know." "They're also hi[illegible] in protein," officer [Shield #64[illegible] adds. Customer not amused. Arg[illegible] ment escalates. Scuffle ensues. O[illegible] cers take thirty-two-year-old m[illegible] customer into custody, and—comp[illegible] ments of a grateful and politic E[illegible] gene—two Cha Cha Chick[illegible] Chimichangas and a Mucho Mac[illegible] Nacho Plate to go.

6700 Block, Coast Highway. Offic[illegible] go to beach. They park Patrol U[illegible] at overlook, dig into chimichang[illegible] chew thoughtfully, ponder view. T[illegible] sky above is heavy and gray, a slab[illegible] concrete. The ocean chops fretfu[illegible] beneath it, muddy green, frothy

oup. Officer [Shield #647] loves the two of them can be quiet to- er. There is some small talk: the ming POA ballots; Tasers, yea ay; the K-9 Unit's dog-fighting dal. But mostly there is only the of the cooling engine, the dis- whump of surf against shore, the crackling like a comfy fire. Offi- sigh. Officer [Shield #647] ges- with chimichanga at vista be- them. "There's a saying," he says. v's it go—?

ue skies all day, officers gay.
skies gray and clouds creep, officers weep.

er [Shield #325] chews, nods, ows her brow. "It's an old say- ' he adds. "You know. Happy Not gay gay." She laughs. He hs, too. Relief fills Patrol Unit. eight is lifted. A door eases itself n and swings wide. His right d slips from steering wheel and hts, trembling, upon her left e. Her breath catches, then be- again—steady, resolute. Officers low, park chimichangas carefully lash. Officers turn one to the r. Suspect in back seat asks if 're done with those chimis, com- ns he's hungry, too, you know, plains that *some*body in Patrol t didn't get to eat his combo e and can they guess who? Offi- terminate break, split Mucho ho Nachos three ways, transport ect to Division for booking.

Block, Glenhaven Road. Crimi- trespass and vandalism at con- ction site. Four pallets of eight- framing two-by-fours chainsawed a grand assortment of useless - and four-foot one-by-fours. Offi- walk scene, sniff air. Sawdust, gas es, chain oil. It is a pungent mix, plex and heady. Officers inhale ly, go all woozy.

0 Block, Frontage Boulevard at hway 99. Injury accident. Soil duction collapses shoulder of n Street on-ramp. Three vehicles down embankment. Officers no- EMT and DOT Units, assist in- d, secure scene. State Patrol pulls kills engine, emerges from Patrol it like starlet at movie premiere. te Patrol is starch-crisp and preternaturally perspiration-free. State Patrol thanks officers for their assistance, flashes horsey smile, tips dopey hat. Officers sit slouched on Patrol Unit, watch State Patrol strut about. "Prince of Freeways," officer [Shield #647] mutters. "Lord of Turnpikes," he says. Partner suggests that a more collegial relationship with State Patrol is called for. "King of the Road," he continues. "Ayatollah of the Asphalt." Officers giggle, get all silly, love that they can be silly. DPW Units swing by, offer wide range of orange gear and signage: SLOW, CAUTION, choice of SOIL SUBDUCTION or SUBDUCTED SHOULDER.

2200 Block, Felicity Court. Domestic disturbance. Man with golf club pounds on washing machine in garage. Woman in lawn chair applauds his every blow, whistles, barks like dog. Dogs next door whipped into frenzy by noise, bark like woman in lawn chair. Soapy water jets in jugular arcs from innards of crippled washer, streams down driveway, gurgles into gutter. Officers linger in Patrol Unit, assess scene, swiftly reach unspoken agreement, gun engine, hightail it out of there.

1000 Block, Clearview Terrace. Traffic obstruction. Sinkhole reported in street, measuring twenty-five feet across by four feet deep. Officers peer down hole, whistle. DPW Units flush restraint down crapper, go whole hog in establishing perimeter—orange barricades and flashers, orange arrowboards and signage, orange-garbed personnel braiding Reflect-O-Tape throughout scene like carnival light-strings. Sinkhole perimeter is now a secure and festive perimeter. Officers clash with tableau, sent off to disperse rubberneckers: "Move along, folks, nothing to see here, move along."

2200 Block, Oak Street. Public intoxication and urination. Outside Ye Olde Liquor Shoppe. Sixty-four-year-old male taken into custody. During transport to Division, officer [Shield #325] confesses: "I've always wanted to say that. You know: 'Move along, nothing to see here.'"

5500 Block, Pleasant Avenue. Vandalism. Eighteen mailboxes destroyed along roadside, lopped neatly off their posts in a bout of mailbox baseball, but with chain saw instead of baseball bat. "Mailbox lumberjack," officer [Shield #325] muses aloud. Shot at whimsy misses mark. "Har-dee-har," complainant says. "Ha-fucking-ha." Officer [Shield #647] wonders aloud if somebody maybe put their crabby pants on today. Officer [Shield #325] adds that maybe they OD'd on their potty-mouth pills, too. Argument escalates. Scuffle ensues. Fifty-five-year-old male complainant taken into custody.

2200 Block, Felicity Court. Domestic disturbance. Woman wielding shovel hacks at wide-screen television set in driveway. Under canopy of tree in front yard, shirtless man sits on case of beer, pounding brewskies, watching woman, offering profane commentary. Above him, slung into limbs and branches, wet laundry drips heavily—hanged men left in the rain. Dogs next door yowl and bay. Officers cruise by, tap brakes, assess scene, nod assent, hightail it out of there.

2500 Block, Fairmount Street. Criminal trespass and vandalism. Spivak's House of Wicker. Wicker chewed and chopped chain-saw style. Officers move silently into gray wicker haze, powdered with wicker dust, in awe of the sheer totality of wicker havoc.

1900 Block, Cypress Avenue. Illegal assembly. Demonstrators blocking access to public health clinic, refuse order to disperse. All available units dispatched for crowd control. Officers gathered at staging area, briefed on use-of-force policy, on arrest and intake procedures, then sicced on crowd. Officers stoked, fired up, ready to rhumba. Hand-to-hand maneuvers seemingly long forgotten—arm locks and choke holds, the supple choreography of baton work—all return facilely to muscle memory. Crowd control progresses smoothly. Officer [Shield #325] musses hair clobbering balky demonstrator. A scrawny little hank slips loose, nestles against her right cheek, framing the side of her face like an open parenthesis. A semaphore of possibility, officer [Shield #647] muses, spotting her while clobbering his balky demonstrator. Amid the tussle and heat of arrest and intake, she looks up, seeks him out, finds him. She smiles, waves shyly. From across the tactical

field, he smiles, waves back, sticks out tongue. She is suddenly overcome, startled at how the sight of him affects [illegible] something profoundly less complex, as unadorned and simple as the Vehicle Code. Officer laughs, cries. Tearful and [illegible] strator with joy in her [illegible] dispersed. Scene secured. Officers [illegible] ink and damp in the afterglow [illegible] sues. Shirttails tucked, batons wiped down, cigarettes shared. Backs and [illegible] slapped all around.

6700 Block, Coast Highway. Officers go to beach, park at overlook. Officers pooped, reposed. They do not speak. They sip double lattes, ponder view. A gash in the bruise-colored sky bleeds yellow. Sunshine leaks into the ocean, stains its surface with shimmering light. He looks over at her, notices a discoloration, a swelling on her left cheekbone. His hand reaches out, his fingers touch the wound, touch her. "You're hurt," he says. She smiles, whispers, "You should see the other guy." They park their double lattes on dash, slip off their sunglasses, avert their eyes. They screw their faces against the jagged harshness of an unpolarized world, slip sunglasses back on. His hands reach for hers; their fingers clasp and enmesh, roil and swarm at the fourth finger of her left hand. Officers tug and pull, remove and park ring on dash. He reaches for her. She leans toward him; it is like falling. Officers fall. Afterward, they linger over their coffee. Wedding ring on dash glints in the shifting light, harmless as a bottle cap or a shiny old button, something a bird might snatch up. Officers watch a ball of sunlight flare up at earth's edge like a direct hit. Officers assess scene, ascertain world to be beautiful.

2200 Block, Felicity Court. Domestic disturbance. Officers pull up, kill engine. They dawdle in Patrol Unit, fiddling with the mirrors and the radio, double-checking the parking brake. Officers sigh heavily, climb out, and assess scene. Garage door closed. Curtains in windows of home drawn. Officers walk up driveway, pick their way through the detritus of television set and washing machine. They knock on door, ring bell. No answer. Neighborhood quiet. Dogs next door quiet. Birds quiet. Everything, in fact, is quiet. The quiet of earplugs, of morgue duty, and of corridors at 3 A.M. The quiet before an alarm clock goes off. Officers backtrack down driveway, approach west side of house, move toward a gate in the fence that leads to back yard. They move gingerly across a saturated lawn, squishy beneath their feet. Soapy water oozes into the tracks they leave. Up ahead, against an exterior wall of house, a pile of freshly cut wood comes into view—one-by-four posts and whitewashed flatboards painted with black block letters. [illegible] one of them reads. MURDUR reads another. Chainsawed picket signs. Officers' napes prickle, butts clench in autonomic response. They thumb the release tabs on their holsters, move toward gate. They lift latch, ease gate open. Above them, the sky clears and the sun breaks. The shadow of a distant airplane skims over them, glides across the lawn, disappears. Officers enter back yard. The back fence sags forward. Trellises and plant stakes list at crazy angles. A brick barbecue sits crumpled atop its sunken hearthslab. The deck along the west side of the house is a corrugation of collapsed planking. It is as if the earth here simply gave up, shrugged, and dropped six feet. Officers move along periphery of sinkhole, toward the sliding patio doors that open onto deck. Their panes are shattered. The ground glitters with pebbles of safety glass. From within, cool air drifts out. And then they are hit, bowled over by a surge of vapors foul and thick—the redolence of mimosa, clawing at their eyes and throats, like some monstrous blossoming from somewhere inside the house. And then the noises. First, a loud muffled report—the only way to describe it. Then, rising from the basement—or from someplace deeper still—the robust glissandi of a chain saw, its motor throttling up and down, laboring mightily. And within this an indeterminate overtone—the cadence of voices, urgent and shrill. Shouting, or laughing. Or screaming. Officers unholster service revolvers, position themselves at either side of patio entry. They slip off their sunglasses, take this moment to let their eyes adjust to the dark inside. They look at each other. His eyes are dark brown, like coffee or good soil. Hers are gray, flat as lead except for the glint of a pearly chip in one iris. They do not speak. They love that they don't have to say anything. Instead they reach down, check ammo pouches for extra clips, wipe palms on duty trousers. Eyes adjusted, they draw and shoulder their weapons. They brace their wrists, release their safeties, silently count three, and take a breath. Whereupon officers cross threshold, enter home.

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### June Index Sources

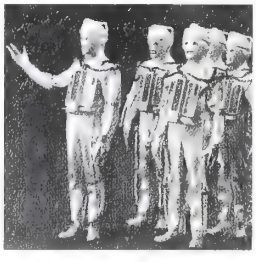
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# EW BOOKS

*John Leonard*



ll of a sudden, in 1974 in Orange County, California, the science-fiction novelist and noid pillhead Philip K. Dick start-reaming in patches of violent col-ours and hours of centrifugal splat- and jagged abstract shapes, like tings by Kandinsky or Picasso. Ob-sly, telepathic Soviet scientists bombarding him with modern om the Hermitage in Leningrad. did these Soviet scientists belong the confederacy of the golden —underground Christians who already warned Dick, via his den- that the actual year was A.D. 70 that the Roman Empire was still in ge—or were they working instead to jam his neural frequencies? hen he recalled a letter from .islas Lem, inviting him to Poland. rly, the Eastern Bloc hoped to lure behind the Iron Curtain, where a room in Warsaw waited with white walls and a syringe. And so, in a conversion experience every bit as lurid as what happened to Whittaker Chambers, after reading road signs, cereal boxes, and fortune cookies, after consulting St. Paul, Winnie the Pooh, the operas of Richard Wagner, the hexagrams of the *I Ching*, and the Tibetan Book of the Grateful Dead, Philip K. Dick phoned the FBI, named names, and asked the government for protection.



A pretty pass for a loner/loser who lived most of his life in the People's Republic of Berkeley, one part vestigial left and two parts countercultured; who believed that Nixon's Plumbers, before they got to Watergate, had already burgled his very own gingerbread house—unless, of course, he burgled himself. That's the problem with having intuited so early on that objective reality is a scam; that we are surrounded by simulacra, lied to by robots, programmed by aliens, or maybe semi-dead already, a box of cryogenic popsicles. After five bad marriages, who knows who you are? And doses of everything from Serpasil for heart murmur and Semoxydrine for agoraphobia to grass for relaxing and Benzedrine for brain buzz (on one bottle of amphetamines, he could write a whole novel in two weeks, without sleeping) just upped the ante on the passing strange.

After Lawrence Sutin's *Divine Invasions* (1989), maybe we didn't need another account of the author whose pulp fictions inspired such films as *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, and *Minority Report*. But Emmanuel Carrère's I AM ALIVE AND YOU ARE DEAD: A JOURNEY INTO THE MIND OF PHILIP K. DICK (Metropolitan Books, $26) is remarkable—a depth charge, a CAT scan, and an exorcism. Carrère, whose own eerie novels include *The Adversary*, proves that it's still possible for the French to write like Voltaire rather than Derrida. Informed, affectionate, sardonic, he is also crystal clear. Never mind the absent father, crazy mother, dead twin sister, Cold War, comic books, or suicide tries: "What [Dick] asked of culture, psychoanalysis, and even religion," Carrère tells us, "was not that they educate him but that they hand over the password that would permit him to escape from the cave wherein we are shown not the real world but only its shadows."

This, alas, describes an entire generational subculture not confined to the sixties, a bunch of addled nomads who agreed with Lily Tomlin that reality was just "a collective hunch," who assumed with R. D. Laing that madness was a proof of grace, and who thus deserved Harlan Ellison's disdain: "Took drugs. Saw God. B[ig]

*sition VI*, by Wassily Kandinsky © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York City/ADAGP, and Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York City. Photograph of cyberman © CORBIS

picking through the rubble could tell the difference between toxins and nutrients. As important as Lucretius, Dostoevsky, Wittgenstein, and Mozart may [illegible] op Pike, and Olivia Newton-John. [illegible] phonograph, "You're No Good," he [illegible]

In turn it was inside the incubation of these windblown kites, stormy petrels, vanguard artists, lab rats, and cannon fodder. "I do not want to express only what other people have felt," the baby-faced poet Dylan Thomas told us between pulls on the bottle and puffs on the cig; "I want to rip something away and show what they have never seen." But it was himself he ripped away in public, onstage, long after the poetry deserted him. "I hold a beast, an angel, and a madman in me, and my enquiry is as to their working, and my problem is their subjugation and victory, downthrow & upheaval, and my effect is their self-expression." The beast broke his ankles and ribs. And much as Andrew Lycett in [illegible] (Overlook, $35) would like to blame Dylan's snobby dad, a grammar-school English teacher who thought he was a gentleman of letters; or his flibbertigibbet mom, indulging the juvenile delinquent who threw rocks at swans; or his crazy wife, Caitlin, who tried to match him drink for drink and adultery for adultery; or even America, where Shelley Winters let him feel her breasts—sadly, it was none of the above.



From Lycett's own minute-by-minute account, Dylan clearly had an alcohol problem from age seventeen. And was warned by doctors as early as 1933 that booze would kill him. Girlfriends abandoned him to pubs before he was old enough to vote, and passersby on the London mayside had to pull him by boat hook out of the Thames. "Comrade Bottle" is how Pamela Hansford Johnson described her competition for his affections. From childhood on, poetry may have been the normal respiration of his intelligence, but he was always broke and sponging on mates because he would spend his pockets empty on another round while delivering yet another impersonation of Edward G. Robinson and Harpo Marx, or badmouthing "nannygoat" William Wordsworth, or insisting that even incest was preferable to homosexuality. For the same reason, he missed the births of all his children, and whether they were fed or not depended on editors, agents, and patrons; on the BBC, American colleges, and Edith Sitwell.

He said it, I didn't: "I see the boys of summer in their ruin." Then add another line of his that, like "The 1812 Overture," seemed more profound the younger we were when first we heard it: "After the first death, there is no other." Dylan wrote an article on the thin line artists tread between sanity, eccentricity, and madness, mentioning William Blake. But he sat down with the rest of them to admire their wise-guy profiles in the mirror behind the bottles lit by the candles they made sure to burn at both ends. There are perfectly pleasant anecdotes in this biography about Augustus John, Lawrence Durrell, Kenneth Tynan, Charlie Chaplin, Arthur Miller, and Christopher Isherwood. That Sylvia Plath, John Berryman, Jackson Pollock, and Charlie Parker also died before their time goes unmentioned. But I want you to picture Dylan in America, not at the White Horse or San Remo but in the private home of a literary critic and his fiction-writing wife. Stanley Edgar Hyman has fallen asleep watching a baseball game on television, so a drunken Dylan propositions an overweight Shirley Jackson, who runs away in her underwear from such a lottery prize. We only thought the sixties were so self-destructive because we forgot about the equally d ranged forties and fifties, with hyd bombs and Elvis and the Beats, ja musicians strung out on heroin ar race, abstract expressionists slashing the rain forest landscapes in their ve sore heads, poets lost to lithium, loo bins, and suicide, and the rest of complicit in our celebration of the excess. We egged them on. They we the fuel we burned.

So what a relief it is to conte plate Colm Tóibín's contoure textured, lapidary novel, TH (Scribner, $25), in wh Henry James is seen from Janua 1895 till October 1899, mostly London, Venice, or Rye; buyi Lamb House to steal himself aw from the jeers that greeted his pl *Guy Domville*; entertaining h tiresome friend, Oliver Wend Holmes, and his difficult brother, suddenly invalid William; remem bering his doomed, brilliant sist Alice and the likewise tragic Min Temple, who inspired so many of h American women abroad; mourni the suicide of the troubled novel Constance Fenimore Woolson, w had rather hoped Henry would l her; writing *The Spoils of Poynto What Maisie Knew*, *The Awkwa Age*, and *The Turn of the Scre* thinking about not so much a figu in the carpet as the beast in the ju gle; and choosing to renounce a s life in spite of two temptatio knowing full well (although never course saying so even to himse that any such intimate expressi was bound to be homosexual.

The question Tóibín asks ir novel that is Jamesian without t serpentine sentences, without t cumulus clouds of dependent cla es, is whether James gave up havi any life at all in order to stand o side the windows of the busy wo and, from his observations of sha owed corners and dark dreams a mixed motives and ferocious secre make an exquisite art. The ansv suggested is that he did indeed rel quish such a hope, knew he h done so, and felt ambivalent ab it, between laps in the ambiguit that were his healing waters, bathtub sea.

*Lucifer in The Firmament of the Great Abyss*, [illegible] by William Blake © Private Collection/Bridgeman Art Lib

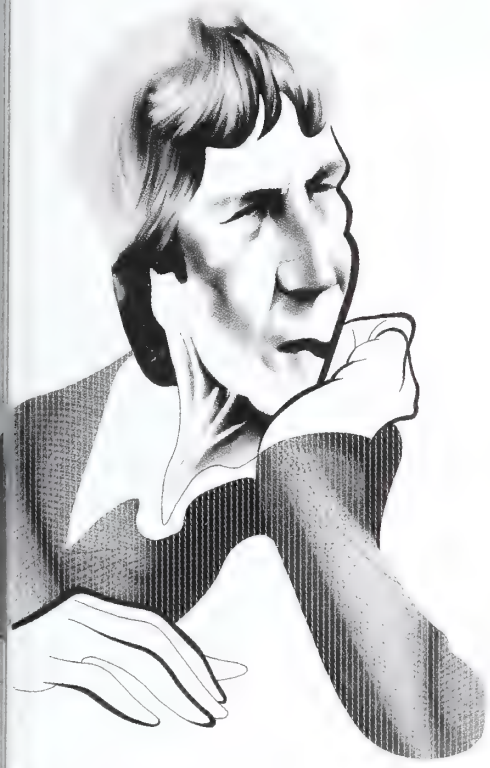
# GENEROUS MIND

## e realism of Natalia Ginzburg

*Robert Boyers*

ssed in this essay:

*Hard to Talk About Yourself*, by Natalia Ginzburg. Edited by Cesare Garboli d Lisa Ginzburg. Translated by Louise Quirke. University of Chicago Press, 03. 202 pages. $25.



Natalia Ginzburg had little patience for pretense or fake civility. Although the Italian r complained of others who had ve for "the daily current of exis-," she was preternaturally poised iticize. Friends, family members, agues were valued and adored ly, it would seem, for their ca- y to avoid sickly sentimentality self-deception. What she called "the strange gift of motivating and stimulating" she associated with sharp, honest, often harsh truth-telling. "I realized," she declares in one of several 1990 interviews collected in *It's Hard to Talk About Yourself*,

> that this son of mine . . . is an interlocutor for me . . . I offer him what I've written, he reads it and immediately responds with a stream of insults and abusive remarks . . . a savage and amused bullishness. Laughter and happiness pour out of his coal-black eyes, from his wild, black, hairy head. I think that insulting me is one of the pleasures of his life. Listening to his insults is certainly one of the pleasures of mine.

The pleasure is obvious as well when Ginzburg speaks almost gleefully of the scorn directed at her plays and essays by her novelist friend Elsa Morante, or savagely criticizes a novel by another friend, Alberto Moravia. "Perhaps there is something cruel in Natalia's art," wrote Eugenio Montale. So clear was it that Ginzburg could be counted upon to hold nothing back that even those on the receiving end of her toughest criticism tended to be forgiving. After all, they felt, she was hard on everyone, not least on herself and her own fictional characters.

Ginzburg was ever alert to dishonesty and hated self-deception as if it were a mortal sin. Typically it was not the lies of smiling public men or tyrants she wrote about. She despised imprecision and mistrusted language itself, especially in the hands of skilled writers who knew how to "cheat" more effectively than others. "There is the danger," Ginzburg wrote in an essay entitled "My Vocation," "of cheating with words that do not really exist within us"—by which, presumably, she intended to target varieties of rank inauthenticity: the nobler-than-thou posturing of the oh-so-committed dissident intellectual, the self-righteous accent of the moralist determined to challenge evil and remain untainted, the plaintive bleat of the vulnerable, forever victimized innocent kept down by "patriarchy" or by other conspiratorial forces. The recoil, everywhere in Ginzburg's writing, from posturing of any kind is unmistakable. She listens intently, we feel, for the slightest falsity and pounces upon it before it can establish a foothold in her sentences. When admirers use words like "naked" and "pure" to describe her prose, they are referring to that quality of scruple in the writing, that refusal, or inability, ever to be entirely forgiving, or pleasant, or pious, or accommodating.

Although Ginzburg, who was born in Palermo in 1916 and died in Rome in 1991, was a leading figure in Italian literary and public life, she was never quite regarded as a major writer. Even in the United States, where her books have long been admired and available, she is not as widely read as Cesare Pavese, Italo Calvino, Primo Levi, or other contemporaries. Some critics speculate that because Italians tend to admire principally a rich, sonorous, literary prose, they could never quite believe a relatively "plain" writer like Ginzburg could be anything but lucid and elementary. Others suggest that she was narrowly regarded as an artist with a limited, "womanly" perspective because she tended most often to write in the first person and usually limited herself—at least in her novels—to interpersonal and domestic issues. There is nothing remotely "feminine" about Ginzburg's style, which often calls to mind the muscular cadences of Hemingway's prose (with which it has absolutely nothing else in common), but she seemed to many readers an "occasional" writer, inspired by the quotidian, a

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tion by André Carrilho

recorder of impressions and fitfully entertained ideas.

Not [illegible] Ginzburg was an obscure figure or unappreciated. Her life has long been well known and widely discussed in Italy, where for many years she wrote a regular newspaper [illegible] and served in the Italian Parliament. When, in 1938, she married Leone Ginzburg, a young man of letters and an anti-fascist militant (who would be tortured and executed in 1944), she was at once drawn into a circle that was soon to become central to Italian intellectual life. That circle included the publisher Giulio Einaudi, whose press published many of the best writers in postwar Italy and employed as editors Pavese, Calvino, and Ginzburg herself. Ginzburg's first novel appeared in 1942, and it was followed by an ample succession of fiction and non-fiction books right up to the time of her death. For some of these volumes she was awarded the major Italian literary prizes, and, by the mid-1960s, Italian schoolchildren of various ages were inevitably confronted by textbook excerpts from her novels and essays. *It's Hard to Talk About Yourself* is a testament to Ginzburg's stature in her own country, where the 1990 interviews were originally broadcast on Italian radio on four consecutive Sunday evenings. The interviews are routinely punctuated by guest appearances, in the course of which several leading Italian critics speak with Ginzburg about her role in the culture.

In Italy it was her memoiristic "fiction," *The Things We Used To Say*, that brought her fame in 1963, when the book won the Strega Prize. It is, without question, one of her best and most characteristic works—a combination of sardonic humor and intimate reminiscence, of swift, efficient narrative and harsh yet also affectionate portraiture. Although here and there Ginzburg pauses for reflection, for the long, considered view ("After the war, the world appeared vast and unknowable and without boundaries"), much of the book has the feel of improvisation. The writer wishes to share everything that comes to mind, to tell her stories, one after another, and does so with a pungency that seems to us natural, without affectation, and we [illegible] once that the shaping imagination is very much in control of the onrushing narrative.

Conspicuous throughout is an urgency that reflects not merely the biographical or memoiristic impulse but also the need to discover patterns of meaning in what would otherwise seem eccentric and fragmentary. The rages of Ginzburg's father, for example, are vividly evoked, not merely for their own sake but to identify one plausible source for her attraction to the cleansing properties derived from speaking one's mind. If, in Ginzburg's formative years, fascism held sway, creating a climate "in which it had seemed that the world had been paralysed and struck dumb," and even writers were limited in the words "they were permitted to use," it was essential that she had always before her the example of household familiars who would not hold their tongues. For all of the melancholy that emanates from some of Ginzburg's pages, there is as well an alternating current of defiant, sometimes even joyous, truth telling. And for all of her interest in anatomizing the cultural "paralysis," "nausea," and "ennui" that gripped her contemporaries, particularly during the war years, Ginzburg wrings from her experience stabs of ironic observation; sharp, often paradoxical insights; abrupt, almost casually blunt declarations that stick in the mind, provoking and exhilarating in almost equal measure.

It is characteristic of Ginzburg, in all of her work, to evoke a perfectly singular mixture of affection and admiration on the one hand with anger and disappointment on the other. When she remembers the death of Cesare Pavese or that of another figure, it is neither theories about suicide she wishes to offer nor formal disquisitions on intelligence or calculation: she is thinking, as she always does, about varieties of the human. Ginzburg seems, now and again, to draw conclusions; but they are, all of them, provisional. They emerge from a particular set of experiences, and although they tempt us to invest in them, as if they constituted reliable truths, they become, in Ginzburg's hands, at most a tempo resting place, a pause before the foray into confusion, anecdote, and the darkly consequential. Everything matters for Ginzburg, not the "important" figures like Pavese the big things like fascism and the sistance to fascism but also what stirs her to feeling, judgment, mising, and back again to a new roun anecdote and reflection.

Ginzburg never *determines* to be tertaining or edifying. She entert and edifies because she is alert to e prospect of amusement or parado her material. When she writes her father, a professor of anato "wanted to treat people, but only condition that they didn't ask hi treat them," she inadvertently a key to her own temperament. wants to amuse, to chasten and struct, but only on condition that can do so without feeling that sh answering someone else's call or filling a requirement.

She knows that there is some vi in consistency but won't demand herself or of anyone else simply cause it is responsible for rati people to insist upon it. "My fa smoked like a chimney," Ginz writes, "but he didn't approve of er people smoking." From this, m different conclusions might be dr and Ginzburg is not averse, at se ed moments, to trying them on. ically, though, she is as resistant t definitive and the portentous as s to the ceremonious and the bath In place of theory or platitude she us astringent play of mind. She ways ready to reconsider, if not to take back, everything she says

Of course, the emphasis on as gency and disinfatuation may su that Ginzburg was not naturally a erous person, that her instincts we variably critical. You read one, al matter-of-fact account of the dea her husband and you feel, at le first, that this is a person ill at with emotion who will not allow self to be vulnerable. Elsewhere, certain pages devoted to the dea a friend, occasional sentiments o will be subordinated to expressio anger, or reproach, or clear-eyed icism. Ginzburg is not always qui swallow her bile or to forgive wha

; to be an inexcusable self-
gence in a friend, or in herself.
t she places enormous emphasis
generosity, regarding it as a spir-
achievement that deserves to be
d above all others. In "The Lit-
irtues," perhaps her most famous
, Ginzburg declares that children
d be taught "not the little virtues
ne great ones," identifying "gen-
y" as essential. But "generosity" in
burg does not always resemble
is usually associated with the
and is, moreover, by no means
ly the opposite of "thrift" or
giness." "The great virtues,"
burg writes, "well up from an in-
in which reason does not speak."
rosity is close to "frankness," "a
of truth," and "a contempt for
er." If to be reasonable is to be
l and to protect oneself from cen-
or ridicule, to be generous is to
not at all about seeming impos-
altruistic or impulsive or embar-
gly frank. There is generosity,
burg argues, in refusing to tell lies,
to children, who "should know
infancy that good is not [always]
rewarded and that evil [often] goes unpunished." To love goodness and hate evil is not to pretend that the world is something other than what it is. Quite the contrary: we are generous and good and loving in spite of the fact that there is no "logical explanation" for such things. For Ginzburg, goodness is at the furthest possible remove from the chic irony and the mock-serious detachment that has long passed for sophistication among the enlightened classes, for whom virtue itself is a word invariably set within quotation marks.

Many of Ginzburg's contemporaries also thought hard about the distinction between the moderate and the expansive, the tactful and the frank, trimming and truth-telling. Doris Lessing, for one, identified in the British what she called "a smallness, a tameness, a deep, instinctive, perennial refusal to admit danger," and believed that this was manifested in characteristically "small, circumscribed novels." Ginzburg, however, saw no reason why smallness of spirit should be associated with "small, circumscribed novels." Her own circumscribed fictions are alert to a great range of dangers, shocks, and betrayals, and often one feels that, in works whose characters are entirely without generosity of spirit, this very impoverishment is the primary phenomenon Ginzburg wishes to examine.

In her 1984 novel, *The City and the House*, Ginzburg limits herself entirely to epistolary exchanges among a varied cast of characters. There are no passages of description, no breaks of lyricism or literary language, no signs of an authorial voice or surrogate perspective. Where feelings are expressed they are often skeletal, fragmentary, occasionally enigmatic, even when the letter writer intends some sort of explanation. As readers, we are moved to follow the shifts and feints of this weirdly associative discourse, which can be grimly comical and improbably affecting. If there is generosity at all in the precincts of Ginzburg's novel, it has mainly to do with the willingness of her characters to tell one another what they think and how they feel.

Yet the characters do not have any


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*The role of a writer is not to
y what we can all say, but
hat we are unable to say."
Anaïs Nin*

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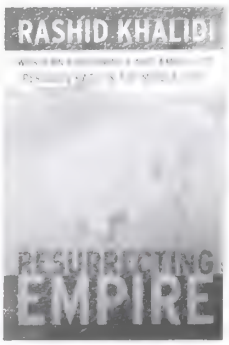
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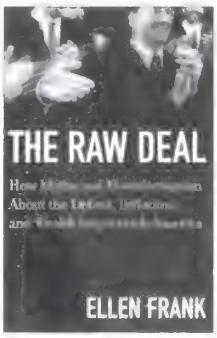
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idea that they are being frank or open or generous. They have no inhibitions about telling their limited "truths" simply because they have no sense of shame or privacy or scruple to inhibit them. People who can say everything to one another may in fact do so because they have nothing inside them to hide. Blontness here is not a sign of virtue or strength but of persons who are all surface, however feverish their efforts to achieve a semblance of connection and gratification.

Often the candor in *The City and the House* is so extreme as to bring us to laughter. One character tells a friend that she is marrying Nino Mazzetta "for the following reasons" and goes on to list them, including in her litany "To please my father" and "Because no one's ever thought of marrying me." Our concern, as we read through her "confessional" letter, is to observe how even the most intimate revelations here tell us only that there is not much to recommend these characters. Ginzburg allows them to be as they are and to express what they are so as not to have to say, in so many words, what she thinks of them. But we know what she thinks of them, and we are grateful to be allowed to decide for ourselves that these persons are really as disappointing as they must seem to their author.

If authentic generosity is rarely in evidence in Ginzburg's minor figures, it is not often discernible in her important ones. *The City and the House* gives us leading characters who are compulsively open about themselves. They tell one another that they were always failures as fathers, or that they betrayed their husbands or loved ones because they fell "in love easily," or that they made momentous decisions—to marry, or to leave family and friends—simply because they were bored or in need of change. "I am coming to America," Giuseppe, the central character, writes to his brother, "like someone who has decided to throw himself into the sea and hopes he will emerge either dead or new and changed." The apparent desperation underlying the assertion is more than a little misleading, however, and reflects mainly the character's inability to think seriously about the implications of his own avowal. He cares not at all about the brother who must take care of him in America or a the fact — which he blithely cont in more than one subsequent lett that as a middle-aged man he ren a child.

It is not that Ginzburg is stubb ly committed to a disenchanted of human beings. In each of her b she allows for exceptions, whicl quite properly represented as ex tional. Giuseppe's homosexual s *The City and the House* displays demptive attachment to an ado child and a capacity for forgive that make him a plausibly gene person; a cousin named Roberta her best to keep family membe touch with one another and disp es helpful advice to people in r But these instances, however sh represented, clearly have no pros of turning any tide or effectivel tering the picture Ginzburg draws, facts of life are unmistakably facts if Ginzburg is not moved to r speeches about moral obscenity, ferring instead to dwell quietly on is all too human, that is becaus her outlook, she is at one with Tolstoy who wrote, of his own Illych, that his life was "most si and most ordinary and therefore terrible." No need, surely, for worked-up melodrama to under that simple, fatal vision of the most of us are.

In *It's Hard to Talk About You* Ginzburg is reminded, again again, that she has always b pessimist. "It always seems," an i viewer tells her, "as if there is s thing that at a certain point tran on your sensitivity or provokes yo dignation." This indignation, sense of being somehow violat revolted by events in the world, ly inspired much of her best w Having lived through the passa Mussolini's race laws in 1938 an years of her husband's detention prisonment, and murder, Ginz might have been expected to re her indignation for comparably vulsive developments. But it is the smallest of things that exer her; nothing is so minor that it ca cape her notice or fail to provok wrath or judgment.

here is no impulse to self-dramaion in the recoil and response of zburg's writing. She does not ad- or insist upon her own principled -finding. Her pessimism is never mastering. She writes, it would n, to discover what she thinks, if she proceeds, inevitably, from rtain predisposition, there is nothlike an inveterate prejudice to ort her understanding. She acts that certain things are more ly to be true than others, but she s not hold her characters to an fate or refuse to be surprised by t she observes.

merican readers, confronting zburg for the first time, may well k of homegrown writers, such as mond Carver, whose characters inably make bad choices, with lives add up to very little. Typically, fictions devoted to such figures ke lives with no prospect of satisory resolution or significant shape. "realism" of American, so-called imalist writing comes out of the se that nothing can be done and there is little or no meaning in lives of people who are largely vat and adrift. By contrast, where nzburg is bleakest, her characters t clueless or pathetic, she is persisly intent upon penetrating to the s of the pervasive ennui and disafion. There is an informing urgency t makes the uneventfulness and ness of the lives she examines not ely disappointing but also deeply ptomatic. Although it is not exnation as such that she is after, she s wish us to see that what we are king at is not to be taken for "real- pure and simple. What seems to us lerable or disheartening in the lives observe is felt to be so because nzburg intimates that there might something better. The vision inning American minimalist fiction en seems pinched, programmatical- narrow; Ginzburg, however, refuses r to write out of lowered expectans or grim determinism.

The Austrian writer Robert Musil ce wrote, "Irony has to contain an ment of suffering in it. (Otherwise s the attitude of a know-it-all.)" nzburg is a relentless ironist, but irony is never presumptuous or ensive. She criticizes or exposes not to air a grievance or to shore up a position. Even when her tone is angry, her sentences betray an awareness of that anger and an openness to correction. A blunt indictment in Ginzburg never seems to have come easily to her, as she herself notes in an essayistic self-portrait: "Compared to telling the truth, inventing was like playing with a litter of kittens. Telling the truth is like moving through a pack of tigers." To be savagely ironic at the expense of an idea or a person necessarily entails assuming responsibility for the cogency and effect of that indictment. The ironist needs to suffer for the portion of the truth or reality not adequately encompassed by her irony. Ginzburg had, in a very high degree, what others have called "a conscience in intellectual matters." There is no tranquillity in her, no instinct to self-approval. Emerging from her own troubled relation to reality, irony was for Ginzburg a means to an end, an instrument of thought, never an end in itself or an expression of self-regard.

Of course, the word "irony" does not begin to suggest the range of Ginzburg's biting portraiture and commentary, but it nicely captures her distaste for rhetoric and her preference for what one reader calls "comic incongruity" and "a low angle of observation." When Ginzburg turned to politics, she knew that life and death matters might well be involved. But she also thought a good deal about the silliness and posturing that are so much a part of politics-as-usual. A woman of the left, Ginzburg was sympathetic to progressive ideas but caustic about movements and the ideologues they attracted. Was she a "feminist"? If she was, she regarded her ties to the "cause"—to any cause—as "obscure, subterranean, visceral." Should women have the right to choose abortion? No doubt they should, she believed, so long as they did not delude themselves about the moral clarity of the issue or try to talk themselves out of their own ambivalence.

When the advantages associated with a choice seemed most obvious and compelling, Ginzburg was most moved to resist. She hated not only slogans but also the pretense that a policy could be adopted without any




thought of consensual. Abortion might seem a reasonable option for some women around the time it had to involve "tearing from one's own body [one's] unborn child—the known living possibility." Feminists who adopted a "position" on abortion without acknowledging the darker aspects opened up by their choice seemed to Ginzburg unserious, and she occasionally directed at them a withering scorn. "I share all the practical goals of the feminist movement," Ginzburg wrote, but she had to admit that she did not "love feminism," did not trust what she called its "spiritual attitude," which was too often triumphalist.

Just so, she was often troubled by revolutionary fervor and political idealism when espoused by people whom she took to be credulous or immature. In an early episode of her greatest book, the long novel entitled *All Our Yesterdays* (1952), Ginzburg observes what revolution can mean to a young woman drawn to it by her infatuation with other young people in the anti-fascist resistance. The woman's head is filled with romantic images of mounted barricades, gunshots sounding in the night sky, people's tribunals, and foolish promises ("and they would give the soap factory to the poor"). Remote from any genuine political reality, she is intermittently exhilarated by her own enthusiastic radicalism: "These thoughts blossomed joyous and arrogant within her," Ginzburg writes. The irony is unmistakable, the criticism more than implicit, directed not at radicalism but at the arrogance and self-deception that are often constitutive features of political radicalism. Again, it is the "spiritual attitude" that concerns Ginzburg—that is, the failure, even on the part of good people, to hold ideas or commit to actions with a determination to see things as they are and to acknowledge misgiving.

That determination is beautifully embodied in Cenzo Rena, the most "positive" of all the major characters in Ginzburg's fiction. A man who mounts no barricades and fires no shots, he is sublimely free of cant and high-mindedness. Living, as he does, in the fascist era that dominates *All Our Yesterdays*, he is at once furious at the stupidity and greed of most people and moved to do what he can to help them. Sympathetic to the resistance and willing to risk everything if absolutely necessary, he is principally a "radical" by virtue of his untiring efforts on behalf of ordinary people, working to assist them in the most unromantic of ways. "All the time making himself a nuisance," Ginzburg writes, Cenzo Rena spends his days "digging out old crumbling records from the bottoms of drawers" in municipal offices, berating incompetent schoolteachers, and urging pharmacists to supply remedies needed by the peasants in his village. He loathes above all things useless make-believe, which is to say, lies, inertia, idle fantasy. "He did not pretend," Ginzburg says of him. He was what he purported to be: friend, protector, scourge. By no means a saint or impossibly wise, he is, all the same, refreshingly blunt and in every way genuine, unapologetically defiant in his resistance to dreamy sublimity. Although Ginzburg was, on her own account, more than a little susceptible to drift and dream, she admired at least this one utterly down-to-earth character whose gift for truth-telling matched her own.

At one point in the novel, and then again several times later on, Cenzo Rena tells Anna—the young woman, pregnant with another man's baby, whom he eventually marries and cares for—that she has lived her life "like an insect. An insect that knows nothing beyond the leaf upon which it hangs." Others too are judged in this way, though the word "insect" is principally and most memorably addressed to Anna. Occasionally Rena says "that she had not had quite so much of an insect face recently," but such "praise" is rare.

More than one critic notes that the abuse directed at Anna is inexcusable, issuing as it does from the mouth of an older man attacking a younger and clearly more vulnerable woman. But there is no pattern of gender-coded abuse in Ginzburg's work. She is, as we have seen, critical of everyone, men and women, and Rena is no less tolerant of male "insects" than he is of Anna. If Rena did not do his best to love his wife, or treat her well, or encourage her to behave more respon
bly and thereby to think better of h
self, he would not seem to us a
mirable. When he says "like an inse
he intends criticism not simply of
wife's behavior but of the attitude
forming everything she does. The
is, he believes, something cheerl
and passively accepting in his wi
stance. She has allowed herself to
come someone to whom things
done and for whom things merely h
pen. This passivity Rena finds alm
unforgivable. He sees something f
and blanched in this person, who
seemingly resigned herself to the id
that she has nothing to give and the
fore little capacity to say *no* to w
others would make of her. Wh
Ginzburg demanded of herself in
autobiographical essay—"She wo
be assiduous and generous in besto
ing her wealth"—Rena demands,
effect, of his wife. She is an "insect"
cause she does not wish sufficiently
be anything else. It is not confusion
reluctance that Ginzburg dislikes
the absence of will, which is here
other word for generosity or fullnes
being. Rena's virtues—impulsivene
decisiveness, the combination of
patience and tolerance, anger and
fection—obviously seemed
Ginzburg the essential alternativ
Rena doesn't abdicate life: that is
best that can be said for him, an
says a great deal.

Ginzburg was a great writer in p
because she never allowed herself
any of her characters to get away w
an investment in false horizons. S
loved, or honored, reality enough
believe that it could somehow
enough. Although she was impati
with delusion, she had a gift for
unfathomable and never met a c
tradiction that didn't at least ten
her. Rarely afraid of being a bore,
was faithful to her own insights a
never wrote a lax or boring senten
She knew she would "never be cur
of the "evil" she encountered dur
the war, but she rightly speculated th
there was "one good" that came
of those years: "We cannot lie in bo
and we cannot lie in anything else
do. We have a toughness an
strength that those who came before
have never known." Young wor
those, written just after the war b

g writer. And in many respects
burg was right, at least where she
lf was concerned. She couldn't
ıd if she was, to the end of her life,
ıd to this our anguish," she wrote as one who was "glad, at heart, of our destiny as human beings" and committed to the idea that "our destiny" was hers to make, and unmake, and remake, as the spirit moved her. ■

# NVITATION TO CRUCIFIXION

## ndamentalism goes to Hollywood

*Francine Prose*

ssed in this essay:

*Passion of the Christ*, written by Benedict Fitzgerald and Mel Gibson and rected by Mel Gibson, 2004.
*Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, written and directed by Pier Paolo solini, 1964.





an Stefano Rotondo is, by far, one of the strangest churches in Rome. Encircling the interi- f the round basilica is a cyclo- a of torture and death: thirty es of saints being flayed, de- ed by wild beasts, roasted alive, so forth. What makes the late enth-century mural so exceptionally chilling is that it has been painted with neither feeling, technical skill, nor even naive charm, so that as you loop past the horrors there's not much to focus on but the obsessive cataloguing of murders and the fiendish ingenuity with which we humans devise new ways to maim and kill one another.

It's hardly Rome's most popular site, which may explain why the Italian press, deploring the violence of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, appeared to assume that a Hollywood actor had invented the idea of depicting innocents dying horribly for their beliefs. Perhaps if the Italian reporters had recalled this homegrown precursor of Gibson's artistic vision, they might have seen both the film and the current moment in light of the period when the murals were painted, an era of famine, natural disaster, and political and social conflict during which the Church—caught up in the inquisitional fervor of the Counter-Reformation—exhorted artists to render more graphically the sufferings of the martyrs so as to make new converts and gather the faithful more tightly into the fold.

One could say that *The Passion of the Christ*—by lingering over every scrap of scourged skin, every splat of blood—has raised the bar far beyond the imaginings of the sixteenth-century Church officials. Except that it wouldn't be true. Because neither the clerics nor the artists they employed needed to use their imaginations. Just steps from their studios or ecclesiastical palaces, they could have witnessed the real thing, the gory executions that provided a popular form of mass entertainment. Although the pope was empowered to save the condemned from being beheaded, quartered, or burned in the piazzas of Rome, clemency was rarely granted. For if Christ had shed his blood to redeem mankind, if the martyrs went singing to their deaths to affirm their faith, why should the common criminal be spared?

Today, only a few select witnesses are invited to observe our "humane" executions, from which the rest of us sensibly avert our eyes. So it's only in the dark of the multiplex that we are permitted to behold—in close-up and living color—the sort of spectacle once commonly staged for ordinary citizens throughout Europe and the United States, where public hanging existed until the 1930s. Happily, *The Passion of the Christ* allows its audiences to watch the full blow-by-blow of a state-sanctioned killing while feeling that they are experiencing a religious event orchestrated by, and in the service of, a loving and merciful God.

*ine Prose is a contributing editor of* Harp- *Aagazine. Her next novel,* A Changed *, will be published in spring 2005 by erCollins.*

ings of frescoes in San Stefano Rotondo by Giovanni Battista Cavalieri, 1585, from ence Collection, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations

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—Alan Wolfe, *The Progressive*



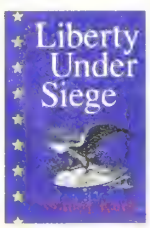

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The *Passion* generated such [illegible] unprecedented "tsunami" [illegible] distributor's term) of media attention that during the weeks surrounding its Ash Wednesday premiere it was hard to imagine anything else was happening in the world. The importance of faith in American society edged other topics, including Democratic presidential primaries, out of the spotlight, and the reenactment of a 2,000-year-old execution in Jerusalem proved far more of a hot-button topic than the actual deaths occurring in Iraq and Haiti. If the Holy Spirit was, as Gibson claims the film's behind-the-scenes director, some darker demiurge seems to have been at work as its ghostly publicist, intuiting that the most sensational aspects of Christ's death—its brutality and the controversy over the identity of the executioners—would naturally become the movie's most marketable talking points. Early on, word leaked out that the film dramatized the infamous verse, from the Gospel of Matthew, in which the Jews demand Jesus' death—the passage responsible for centuries of violence. Our infamously ahistorical culture was suddenly involved in a public conversation about Imperial Roman politics, and, as we debated the question of who killed God, it suddenly seemed shortsighted to have focused on such earthly, transient trivia as the weapons of mass destruction.

But perhaps the most unusual thing about this particular media circus was the fact that a movie was actually being considered as a potentially powerful force in the real world, capable of inspiring faith and sparking sectarian violence. The concern most often expressed was that the film might spur an upsurge of anti-Semitism. But in fact the agenda aimed at something larger than simply to make life more unpleasant for Jewish minorities here and abroad.

"People spoke; they wanted," said one of the producers. And the fervor with which *The Passion* was embraced by ticket buyers, if not critics, sent a message from the Christian right to what they call secular America and its leaders: We're out here, don't forget us, there are more of us

ıe last hideous agony, or if the
e has reached some pinnacle
tality, to be followed by a gen-
wnward drift toward the mercy
ıth. After the nails are driven
Christ's wrists and ankles with
blows and howls of pain, it
l seem that the worst is over,
the executioners (needing to
back the nails for some reason)
e to drop the cross so that Jesus
ɔn his face. Only after every-
imaginable has been done to
t himself does Gibson begin to
elsewhere for his victims, and,
ind of bonus, we see a frenzied
pecking out the unrepentant
s eye, its jelly splurting across
:reen.

A very religion, if it is to help
us decide what to believe and
how to live, must take a posi-
on the question of violence.
faiths have been obliged to
e the compassion and kindness
:hed by their founders with
followers' all-too-human im-
to vilify and kill anyone who
t look or think differently than
do. Traditionally, this problem
een circumvented by the argu-
t that under certain circum-
:es—when, for example, there
ıeed to establish or maintain a
e moral and political order, or
ı the innocent are in danger
the faithful feel themselves
ıced by infidels and outsiders—
may be said to justify means.
is treatise "The Correction of
Donatists," St. Augustine wrote,
many have found advantage
ve have proved, and are daily
ing by actual experiment) in
g first compelled by fear or
, so that they may afterwards be
enced by teaching." The more
ıted the goal (the liberation of
Holy Land, the establishment of
's kingdom on earth, the rescue
ıe unborn), the more extreme
permissible methods that may
eployed to bring it about: cru-
s, abortion-clinic bombings, as-
nations, torture, the slaughter
vilians.

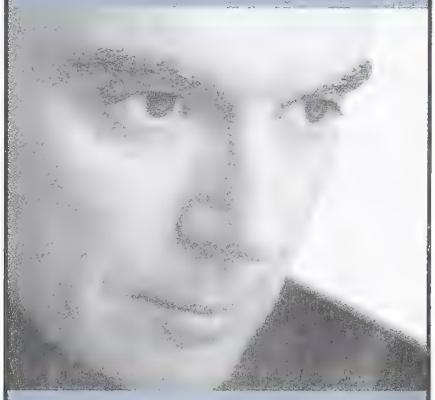
he sadism of *The Passion of the*
*st* could hardly have a loftier in-
ion. What Gibson has in mind is not merely another Hollywood gorefest along the lines of *Braveheart* but rather a film with the power to change and save its audience. Of course, if the main purpose of *The Passion* is evangelism and not capitalism, one might inquire why Icon Productions didn't specify that it be shown for free. But this fortuitous aspect of soul-rescue is what allows such a work of extreme "savagery" to be aimed at precisely those viewers who have been most often told that R-rated entertainment is wrong, and that they should feel guilty about enjoying it. Presumably, they can remind themselves that this is not entertainment but rather pedagogy, a spiritual lesson that will change its viewers in any number of important ways:

1. After watching one man suffer for two hours in the service of a higher cause, any sentient person might feel better about seeing an American soldier or an Iraqi civilian dispatched, comparatively quickly and humanely, to advance the cause of democracy. In the film, Christ's ability to stay conscious and unbowed moves several of his tormentors to a grudging admiration that recalls the coming-around of impressionable guards in movies about plucky POWs standing up under torture. In fact, the repeated emphasis on the manliness of Christ (unlike the decadent Herod, depicted here as a Harvey Fierstein–like diva, replete with heavy eyeliner and a slipping wig) evokes the military ideals of a Victorian boys' school, or the bloody pageantry of the clan warfare in *Braveheart*—an effect underlined by the jarring echoes of a marching-band drum roll under the film's conclusion.

2. After witnessing the cruel murder of the innocent Christ, we may feel more inclined to agree with Justice Scalia about the necessity of invoking the death penalty to punish the guilty. Although at first glance Scalia's views might strike us as being at odds with the teachings of Jesus, in fact they represent a venerable Christian tradition. In the thirteenth century, the Waldensian heretics were re-admitted to the Catholic Church only after swearing off their opposi-

"On his finest solo album in over a decade, David Byrne spins the world's harsh realities into a whimsical landscape seeded with sarcastic truth, sentimental metaphor, and surreal fantasy."
*Chicago Tribune*

DAVID BYRNE

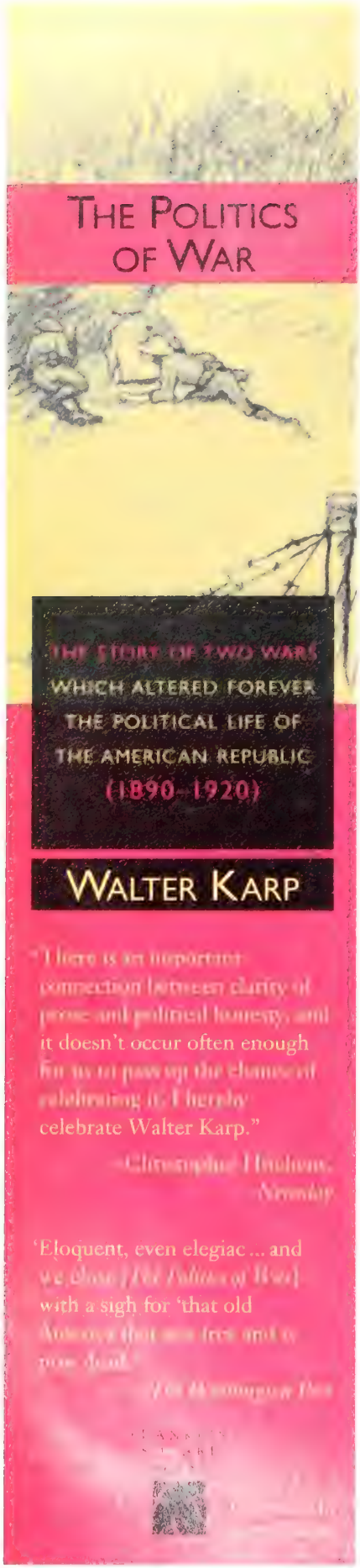


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N
NONESUCH

BORDERS




tion to capital punishment, and in 1985, the Cardinal of Cologne wrote that "the holiness of the divine order has proved its power even in this age through the death penalty." In *Putting Away Childish Things*, his brilliant deconstruction of the myths surrounding the New Testament Gospels, the German theologian Uta Ranke-Heinemann writes: "Christianity is a religion that glorifies one concrete execution—the execution of Jesus—because the Church sees it as an act of redemption through blood. Thus for Christians the death penalty is the prerequisite for their redemption. . . . God is the supreme advocate of the death penalty, since he condemned his son to death and willed his crucifixion as the means of redemption."

3. After observing the sufferings of Mary—who, along with a voluptuous Magdalene, figures prominently in Gibson's film, providing the human face on which we can observe the heroic interplay of grief, resignation, and maternal pride—every American mother should feel similarly ennobled when her own son goes off to do battle for the innocent souls enslaved by oil-rich infidels throughout the Middle East. The religious origin of the idea that mothers should encourage their sons to die for worthy causes has been evoked by the current pope, in whose view Mary "lovingly consented in a maternal spirit . . . to the sacrifice of the victim that she had borne," and was stated rather more forcefully in the sixteenth century by Archbishop Antoninus of Florence, who expressed his certainty that "had no one been prepared to carry out the crucifixion through which the world was redeemed, Mary would have been ready to nail her son to the cross by herself."

Like the rant of a fundamentalist preacher or a political demagogue, Gibson's film bypasses the intellect and plays straight to our crudest emotions. To watch *The Passion of the Christ* is to receive either a crash course in the methods of fundamentalist orthodoxy or an effective indoctrination in its tenets. The film's conception, and the interviews with Gibson preceding its release, all conspired to communicate a mi less, bullying presumption of rig courtliness, a sense that no one wo dare go to these extremes—to m a film so excessive, so unrelenti so bloody, and to finance it with much of the director's own m ev without its creator having C not only on his side but serving his personal loan guarantor.

Throughout history, it's been wi ly acknowledged that the most gr some deaths have the most power intimidate the enemy and to co municate whatever its perpetrat are attempting to convey. That v the principal reason why the Rom took so enthusiastically to the pr tice of crucifixion: long, slow, pub executions were extremely co effective in delivering, to the po lace, the maximum amount of e cation-by-terror. In the same y that Christ was born, the Rom suppressed a rebellion in Palestine crucifying 2,000 Jews at once, o side the walls of Jerusalem. Dur the period in which the murals San Stefano Rotondo were paint the heads of decapitated prison were routinely displayed along Ponte Sant'Angelo, the bridge ne est the Roman prison.

What's striking is how well G son's strategy of intimidation succeeded. The movie never lets forget who is in control (its direc and his Church) while at the sa time encouraging us to empath with the victim of an unjust pow And somehow the film managed identify itself so closely with Ch tianity that although it receiv quite a few harsh reviews, ma others had a tentative tone, a some critics feared that calling tention to the sheer awfulness the film would be tantamount staging an assault on the ten feelings of believers. There was tle mention of how boring the f was, of the tedium that set in dur the predictable phases of mount violence. One might have thou that there was a limit to how lon was possible to watch a man's s being ripped off without check one's watch with increasing f quency. But if anyone felt this w few seemed willing to say so.

you think. Consider us before
ections, before you weigh in on
arriage, the death penalty, or le-
l abortion.
e conversation that the film
d have inspired, and for the
part didn't, concerns the dis-
ng historical relationship be-
religion and violence, the deep
behind our notion that Church
tate should remain separate,
he promise or threat that the
ould make new converts who
in turn add their voices—and
votes—to augment the consid-
pressures already being exert-
our political system by such
ntly conservative groups as the
tian Reconstructionists (who
ate a monotheistic society that
impose the death penalty for
s including adultery and ho-
uality), the neo-Nazi Christ-
dentity movement, and Opus
secret ultra-right Catholic or-
ation whose members are said
lude Supreme Court Justice An-
Scalia, who has publicly stated
pponents of capital punishment
d recuse themselves from gov-
ent service.
some part of our population
uding a president who has stat-
at Jesus Christ is the most pow-
influence on his life and God
vorite writer) wouldn't mind
cing our government with
thing a bit more theocratic,
*assion of the Christ* could serve
model of state-sponsored en-
nment along the lines of those
musicals about heroic cadre
rs so beloved in Maoist China.
rprisingly, Hollywood has fol-
d the film's astonishing box-
success—it earned $23.6 mil-
on its first day and has brought
ore than $331 million thus
with rapt attention, so that it
probable that we will be see-
hat the *New York Times* has
d "a wave of New Testament-
ed movies or more religious
in general."
his comprehensive study of re-
us violence, *Terror in the Mind*
*od*, Mark Juergensmeyer de-
es the strategic political func-
of the bloody public rituals he
"performance violence"—acts

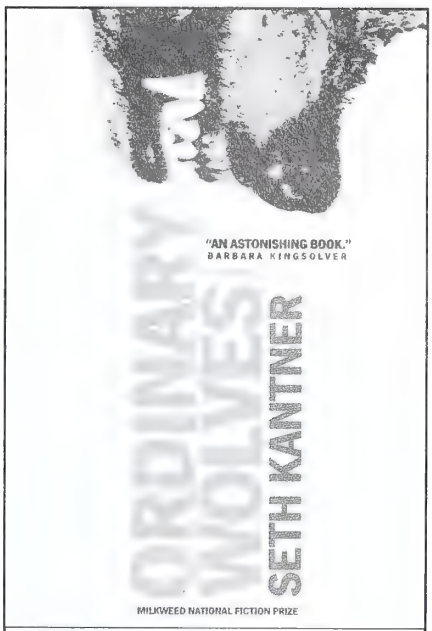
designed to simultaneously discomfit the enemy and reinforce the loyalty of the faithful:

> Instances of exaggerated violence are constructed events: they are mind-numbing, mesmerizing theater. At center stage are the acts themselves—stunning, abnormal, and outrageous murders carried out in a way that graphically displays the awful power of violence—set within grand scenarios of conflict and proclamation. Killing or maiming of any sort is violent, of course, but these acts surpass the wounds inflicted during warfare or death delivered through capital punishment, in large part because they have a secondary impact. By their demonstrative nature, they elicit feelings of revulsion and anger in those who witness them.

Just beneath its simultaneously slick and reverent surface, *The Passion* doles out an improving three-hour lesson, sugarcoated by gore, about justified killing, redemption by blood, the hatred of unbelievers, and the glory of mothers who selflessly sacrifice their sons. Indeed, everything about the film—its conception, its structure, its focus, its strategies for garnering publicity and attention—was calculated to explicate and further a divine plan whose dominion, or so its advocates hope, will someday range from Culver City to Capitol Hill, and which will bring about a kingdom holier and higher than the godless little democracy in which we misguided sinners currently live.

One structural problem that must have confronted Gibson is that to film the story of Christ is essentially to make a biopic. A birth, a life, a death. There's minimal dramatic conflict, no car chases or shootouts, and the outcome is never in doubt. Gibson diagnosed the problem with his predecessors (works such as *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, *King of Kings*, and *The Robe*) as "bad hair or really bad music," but in fact what makes them tough to watch is how dutifully they slog through the Gospels or labor to find a fresh perspective.

Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, which


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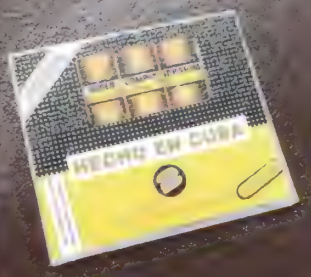
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fact the only one that transcends the [illegible] to become a work of art, imbued with all the complexities and contradictions of art, as opposed to the oversimplifications of religious and political propaganda. Pasolini's determination "to create a pure work of poetry, risking even the perils of [illegible]" and his portrayal of Christ whose "humanity is driven by such an inner strength, such an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and for verification of that knowledge, without fear of any scandal or any contradiction, that for it the metaphor 'divine' almost ceases to be a metaphor and becomes ideally a reality" could hardly have been more unlike Mel Gibson's wish to ensure that the "full savagery" of the event would "jump out of the screen at you."

Once you get past the shock of seeing the apostles as a gang of sexy Roman street hustlers, you're drawn in by the shaky home-movie quality, by the gorgeous score that borrows from Bach and the Missa Luba, by the almost giddy admiration for the poetry of the Gospels, and, above all, by the human drama. In the first scene, a wordless exchange between the child-bride Mary and the much older Joseph telegraphs the dilemma that an inexplicable pregnancy must have occasioned in their May-December marriage. Pasolini's version of the Crucifixion is relatively brief and decorous, but far more moving than Gibson's, perhaps because the Italian director invested so much more screen time and effort in making Jesus a character whom we care about, an individual who acts and speaks, and not merely a suffering body having things done to it. (Indeed, unless you bring a love of Jesus with you into the theater showing *The Passion*, you may have trouble feeling as moved as you think you should, which may ultimately limit the film's efficacy as an impetus for mass conversion.)

It would simply never occur to you [illegible] *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* for accuracy against either the Bible or the historical record, not only because the film's authority and integrity are so persuasive but also because, like most masterpieces, it forever alters the way we respond to its sources and its predecessors. Once you've seen the film, [illegible] had to read the gospels without hearing the furious staccato rant in which the actor Enrique Irazoqui declaims Christ's teachings. Jesus' voice grows progressively louder as he becomes a disruptive force, exhorting his followers to the sort of ethical consciousness and radical decency that have always been problematic for those obsessed solely with power and wealth. To Pasolini's credit, his Jesus is eventually so strident that even as you are marveling over what Pasolini called the "moral beauty" of the Gospels, you can understand why the priests and the Romans might have wanted Christ silenced. And although the movie can be riveting, it certainly has its longueurs.

As does Gibson's film, but, unlike Pasolini, Gibson has as much interest in the Sermon on the Mount—which is, of course, at the heart of Jesus' teachings and of Pasolini's *Gospel*—as the porn-film director has in the precoital pleasantries between the delivery boy and the erotically restless housewife. The truth is that what makes *The Passion* so different from its precursors is neither soundtrack nor coiffeur but rather the canny combination of theology, film aesthetic, and marketing instinct tidily converging in a torrent of blood.

The first scene opens in the Garden, where, in the misty luminescence of a slasher-film nightscape, Jesus has a brief moment of doubt before Judas and the soldiers appear and the punching and kicking begin. There are a few flashbacks, but only enough to remind us of how closely, before he was beaten to a pulp, the actor James Caviezel resembled the clean-brushed vanilla Jesus. At the end, the Resurrection goes by so quickly that if you're putting on your coat you might miss it. Anyway, it's an afterthought. The real drama, the bloodletting, is over.

Seeking an end run around the predictable and inconveniently balanced biopic form, Gibson discovered an alternate source of suspense: the question of whether he can continually raise the ante of violence. At times, you may find yourself wondering how anything

imilar hesitancy pervaded the
irse on the film's anti-Semitism,
ate that focused on the histori-
curacy of Gibson's version of the
process in biblical Jerusalem
than on the power (and the as-
ions) of the actual images one
n screen. A number of critics did
out that there was little question
the virulence with which the
were portrayed. But in fact any
(or at least any child reasonably
ersed in the history of German
ia) might have remarked that
nce such Nazi propaganda films
e *Eternal Jew* has there been so
ractive an exercise in the sort of
typing that raises the specter of
naggle-toothed, hooked-nosed
Whereas Pontius Pilate is de-
l as a man of conscience trying
ve Christ without inciting the
thirsty Jews to rip apart the Ro-
Empire (when Pilate symboli-
washes his hands of Jesus' blood,
terpreted as a gesture of surren-
nd resignation instead of the
y satiric performance that the
els would suggest), none of the
s individualized enough to me-
the dehumanizing depiction of a
l unified by the desire to see Je-
rn to shreds.

rely a director with the sensi-
y to which Gibson pretends
t have asked his editor to re-
der the decision to make our
image of Caiaphas one in
n the high priest is holding a
ey bag. Because we find it so
tening to approach the subject
cism with honesty and clarity,
vithout the obfuscating clouds
xiety and piety, few commen-
s noted the insidiousness with
h the film placed the Jewish
nunity—and the larger cul-
—in an inescapably lose-lose
tion. In his study of the long
problematic relationship be-
n Christianity and Judaism,
*tantine's Sword*, James Carroll
us that the "explicit charge of
de . . . remains the ground of all
natred." But it's arguable that
n of modern American anti-
tism has less to do with the
tion of who actually killed
st than with the popular image
ws as touchy, neurotic, para-



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NOTES FOR "GETTING YOUR BEARINGS":

*The unclued Down entries are ships; the unclued Across entries are their captains (or famous officers). Pequod (Ahab); Argo (Jason); Reluctant (Mr. Roberts); Lydia (Hornblower); Caine (Queeg); Surprise (Jack Aubrey).*

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 1. par(fai[r])ts; 7. pun; 15. *; 18. pup-il(l); 19. *; 20. C-lad; 21. Dis-associated (pun); 29. U-naw(a)res*; 33. Dr-i.e.-r(inse); 35. p(tamer[rev.])ure; 40. *; 41. *; 42. s(peech)-(th)e-same; 44. agha(st).

DOWN: 2. aquaria-N.; 3. foe-it(rev.); 5. in cas(e); 6. *; 7. polic(1)es; 9. trip(l)e; 11. y-ields*; 14. (y)eggs; 16. O-c(to-be)ry; 17. Sp-lay; 22. hidden; 24. *; 27. ho(ur)-using; 28. *; 30. S(hakespeare)-exist; 31. p(Maja[rev.])a; 32. homonym; 34. Ra-D.A.R.; 36. I'm(rev.)-ca-S; 37. int.-O; 38. reversal.

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noically hypersensitive to criticism, and in control of such vital institutions as the banking industry, Hollywood, and the media cabal that radio host Laura Ingraham calls the "anti-Christian entertainment elite." Every attempt to defuse the ancient charge that sparked pogroms in Eastern Europe, and so delighted Hitler as he watched the Oberammergau Passion Play, only succeeds in reinforcing the more modern slander of a people genetically and historically conditioned to overreact.

The resulting cultural unease played directly into the hands of the would-be theocrats, whose cause has been, throughout history, strengthened by the demonization of a common enemy and by the ability to put a name and a face on an inchoate sense of being menaced by outsiders with evil designs on one's spiritual and territorial integrity. How much simpler everything would be if, as the Christian Reconstructionists desire, everyone practiced one religion and we no longer had to deal with the disturbing nuances of our own attitudes toward those who hold different beliefs?

Even as the upsurge of interest in first-century politics gave us reason to congratulate ourselves on our newfound appetite for historical information, we again revealed our lack of genuine curiosity about history—for example, about the periods during which religion has emphasized its most violent, sensational, and sentimental aspects (such as the Counter-Reformation, when the murals in San Stefano Rotondo were painted) and during which the political and ecclesiastical establishments have used anti-Semitism as a marvelously effective sleight of hand to distract the populace from its real woes—poverty, unemployment, financially draining foreign wars, and the increasing concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few. To say, as Marx did, that religion is the opiate of the masses is an oversimplification that ignores an entire heritage of literature, philosophy, and art, as well as the complexities of the human desire for transcendence. But the psychotropic uses of faith—as a drug that has the power to calm or rouse the passions with equal efficacy—have long b[een] known to those political leaders w[ho] would be least likely to think of th[em]selves as Marxists.

Throughout the controversy o[ver] *The Passion of the Christ*, we've c[on]centrated on its least probable eff[ect], the possibility that the film will i[n]spire its audiences to shed innoc[ent] Jewish blood in retribution for the s[in] they've just seen spilled on screen. [As] has been noted—correctly, I think—that the film will make it more soc[ially] permissible to express a certain [kind] of simultaneously thuggish and [high]hand anti-Semitism. Indeed, wh[ile] writing this piece, I overheard, [at a] party, a distinguished San Franc[isco] landscape architect marvel at the s[uc]cess that her son has managed to h[ave] in the film industry despite the [fact] that he is not Jewish and Hollywo[od] controlled by Jews.

But we've more or less overloo[ked] the most likely outcome: the de[gree] to which the film, and its popula[rity] and the controversy surround[ing] that popularity, will embolden th[ose] who would very much like to nar[row] the gap between Church and St[ate]. The film only increases our chan[ce] of hearing, from the current admi[nis]tration, more religious langua[ge], more quotations from the Bi[ble], more references—this time with[out] apology—to the Crusades, and m[ore] framing of our incursions in the M[id]dle East as a holy war staged [to] prove, as Lieutenant Gen[eral] William Boykin put it, that our G[od] is bigger than their God.

Mel Gibson and his supporters h[ave] repeatedly stated their hope that *Passion of the Christ* will generate [a] cussion—of religion, of history, of [the] meaning of the life and death [of] Christ. So in that sense the film [has] already proven to be a success. [Ex]cept that the discussion has m[ost] been about the past, when in fac[t we] should be talking, and worrying, ab[out] the future. For every viewer who [has] been motivated to go home and [read] out his Bible, for every audience m[em]ber who has looked more deeply [into] the question of who actually pa[ssed] the death sentence on Christ, [we] can only hope that ten more wi[ll be] inspired to find out what the theoc[rats] have in mind for our country.

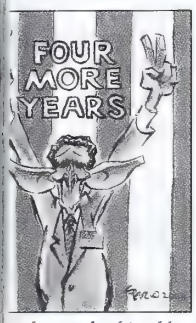
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# LETTERS

*Continued from page 9*

tated weekly, mined for data," for all he knows, "probed rem from outer space."

Kirk's list is an apt summary o surveillance methods currently b deployed in the U.S.-led "war on ror." The links between mo wildlife management and the military date back to the 19 when American wildlife researc began to develop radio-track techniques with funding from Office of Naval Research and w military surplus equipment, f binoculars to boats, found its into the hands of zoologists and rine biologists.

Historians of science have sh that the Cold War strongly i enced the development of fields as physics and oceanography. causal links between the mili and today's technology-inten style of wildlife management are well understood, but the res blances, as Kirk's article amply i trates, are clear.

*Etienne S. Benson*
Cambridge, Mass.

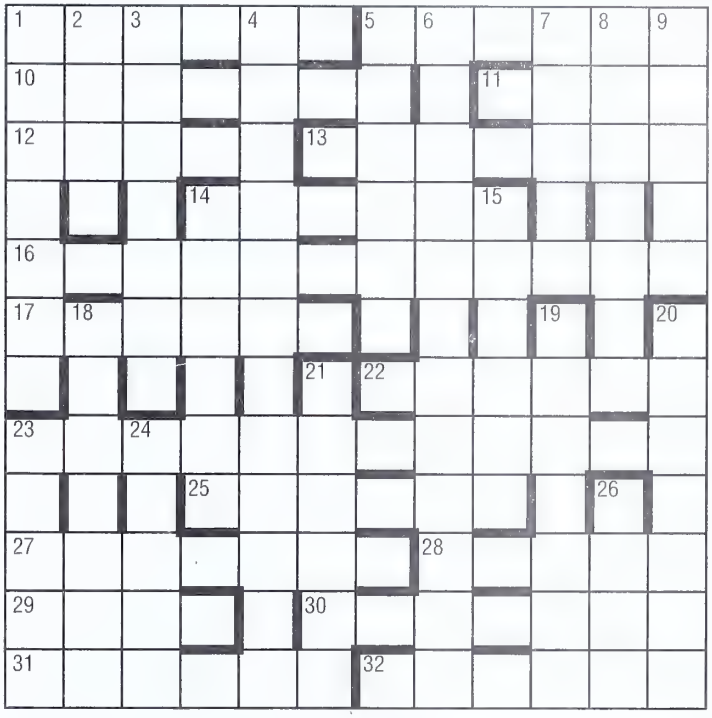
## Artful Dodgers

Thank you for publishing the of the Flux Factory residency at Queens Museum of Art ["De Work," Miscellany, April]. We w bit surprised with some of the c acts they executed here, but it is portant to stress that we went the project with our eyes open an got what we expected—and deser

The members of the Flux Fac are sometimes annoying but al original, anti-institutional, and ative artists who stretch every bo ary presented to them. When left the museum after three mo we missed the orange-jump-su brigade from western Queens. W I recommend that another mus open its doors to the Fluxers? but only if you have a strong ston and a sense of humor.

*Tom Finkelpearl*
Executive Director, Queens Mus of Art
Queens, N.Y.

# PUZZLE



## Sixes and Sevens

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*
*(with acknowledgments to Zander of* The Listener)

The clues to words of six and seven letters in length are grouped separately. Solvers must determine their positions in the diagram.

Answers include no proper names or obscure words. 29A is a variant. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 99.

ACROSS

11. Collection gaining initial imprint of First Edition of Shakespeare (4)
12. Poor halfback's dance (5)
16. People in First Class, being more compassionate, fish throwing catch back (12)
23. Inspectorial adjustments, making clones (12)
28. Evidence of femininity enmeshes you finally in hopeless love (5)
29. Poet's always at the gym? Weird! (4)

DOWN

2. A North American canal's terminus (4)
4. *Animal House*, and others if in rare test shot (12)
6. No longer close-mouthed one is not a zany in *Cheers* (12)
7. A digital display (almost) right on the watch (5)
9. Urge to support party's senior authority (5)
23. Ordered, had dinner down after hour's end (5)
24. One of the cloth drape folds (5)
26. Pad without bumps (4)

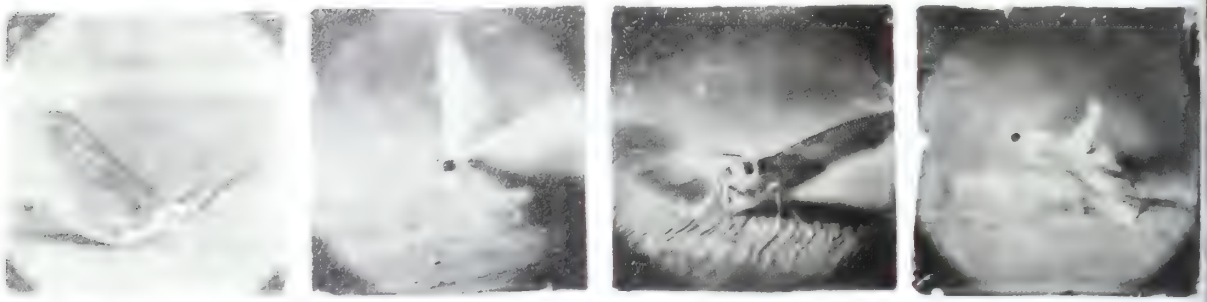
SIX-LETTER WORDS

a) Prohibitionist takes a turn in style
b) Play written in pencil or fine backhand
c) Ladies in dishabille—they're perfect!
d) Old explosive sailor in gym died
e) Annoyance on radio station: personality's idiosyncrasy
f) Good things to have, like scenery
g) If inducted, loud singer returns for duty
h) Everything's covered by . . . by daring
i) Criminally stifle a thing's true nature
j) Hard part of a journey in the afternoon: finding humor
k) Respected one's trees
l) Slim is unable to enter small yard

SEVEN-LETTER WORDS

a) With zest, bash into puzzle
b) Helps think of objects again?
c) Finish face in cosmetics, look okay
d) Milers driven around on Sunday like expensive wheels
e) Dig up her aunt?
f) Social Security covers rising ball-club's club operations
g) Gaining neatness by losing dignity?
h) Jailer number in hopeless Broadway show
i) The power to transform something incredibly lacy around the edge
j) Idle Erie Railroad stocks guarded to a greater degree

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Sixes and Sevens," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by June 14. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the August issue. Winners of the April puzzle, "Cross-Words," are Robert W. Johnson, East Orange, New Jersey; David P. Manus, Seattle, Washington; and Sarah H. Pelmas, San Francisco, California.



# FINDINGS

An Austrian biologist theorized that the erosion of telomeres, highly repetitive DNA at the end of chromosomes, might function as a kind of internal clock that determines when a species will become extinct. Once a species' telomeres have sufficiently dégenerated, the theory holds, individuals will begin to suffer an increase in cancers and immune disorders. Human telomeres, it was noted, are somewhat short. New research suggested that a monkey virus, Simian Virus 40, could cause non-Hodgkins lymphoma in humans; the virus, which was introduced into human populations in the 1950s and 1960s by contaminated polio vaccines, is spread via saliva and other bodily fluids. Ape hunters in Africa have contracted simian foamy virus, a study found, and Aventis Pasteur recalled its Imovax rabies vaccine because a live strain was found in one batch. Muslim leaders in Nigeria were still refusing to vaccinate people for polio, which has been spreading from Nigeria to other African countries. Researchers found that repeated exposure to low-level magnetic fields, such as those emitted by blow-dryers or electric razors, can cause brain-cell suicide in mice. Fertile women, scientists found, are more likely to condemn other women's beauty. A survey of 10,000 Americans' bodily dimensions found that 64 percent of women are "pear-shaped." Scientists discovered that regular consumption of pig whipworm eggs can cure inflammatory bowel disease, and Finnish researchers found that mothers who eat a lot of chocolate give birth to happy babies.

It was discovered that circumcised men are six to eight times less likely to contract the AIDS virus. The FDA approved a quick saliva test for HIV, and rabid vampire bats were attacking people in Brazil. Sex researchers found that impotent men for whom Viagra failed to work were severely distressed, and it was discovered that Viagra can reduce male fertility. Young female chimps, primatologists concluded, are smarter than young males. A transgenic mouse was created that is hairier than other mice, and mice follicle cells were persuaded to grow hair after they were implanted in another animal, suggesting that a baldness cure might be possible. "I'm just in nirvana," said one researcher. Scientists found that buckyballs can cause brain damage in fish.

Swiss Re, the world's second-largest reinsurance company, warned that the costs of climate change could be $150 billion a year before long, with insurers facing $30-40 billion in annual claims. A new study concluded that Greenland's ice sheet could melt within a thousand years, which would raise the sea level twenty-three feet, and two other studies suggested that the Earth is experiencing its sixth known mass extinction. British researchers discovered a previously unknown prion disease among sheep. The feral hog population in East Texas is out of control, wildlife scientists warned, and one rancher said he was afraid to let his grandchildren leave the yard. Researchers found that people who sleep too much have a hard time falling asleep, and an Australian inventor created an electronic gun that can fire one million rounds per minute. Japanese researchers developed a smell cannon that can target an individual and hit him in the nose with an evocative odor without affecting anyone else in the immediate vicinity. A robot conducted the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra in a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Dutch surgeons implanted tiny pieces of jewelry in the eyes of six women and one man. Scientists found the remains of a 9,500-year-old pet cat in Cyprus. Canada banned baby walkers, and American scientists announced that frequent ejaculation can help prevent prostate cancer. Astrophysicists suggested that a highway of dark matter ripped from the dwarf galaxy Sagittarius, which is being consumed by the Milky Way, is streaming right through Earth. Cosmologists said that the universe might be shaped like a horn of plenty. ■

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hrystal Kain and Dr. Michael Macrander, the wetland is their ard, their livelihood and their passion. Chrystal is an environmental alist with a Shell affiliate. Michael is an environmental ecologist Shell Global Solutions. Together, they're fighting back against the n and deterioration that claim 35 square miles a year.

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   - *to lose weight, focus on protein, leafy veg[illegible]ealthy oils.*
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Printed in the U.S. Periodicals postage paid at New York, New York, and additional mailing offices. In Canada, second-class postage paid at Windsor, Ontario. In Canada, International Publications Mail Agreement #40013802. Canadian GST 12477 4167 RT. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Harper's Magazine, P.O. Box 885, Markham Station Main, Markham Ontario L3P8M9. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes to *Harper's*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. ISSN0017-789X. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please provide both address from last issue and new address. All [illegible] SUBSCRIPTIONS: $21 one year Canada and United States possessions, add $2; other foreign, add $20 per year. Send orders to *Harper's Magazine*, P. O. Box 7511, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511. **SUBSCRIPTION PROBLEMS: Write Harper's Magazine, P. O. Box 11, Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0511,** or call (800) 444-4653, M–F, 8 A.M.–midnight, S–S, 9 A.M.–7 P.M., **EST.** All requests for PERMISSIONS and REPRINTS must be made in writing to *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. The Readings in *Harper's Magazine* every month consist of texts and documents found in the public domain, most of them abridged for reasons of space, all of them reprinted with permission. *Harper's Magazine* will not consider or return unsolicited nonfiction manuscripts that have not been preceded by [illegible] and will consider unsolicited fiction. Unsolicited poetry will not be considered or returned. No queries or manuscripts will be considered unless they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Visit our website at http://www.harpers.org

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# LETTERS

## Democracy Now

Richard Rosenfeld's essay ["What Democracy?" May] is provocative but does not go far enough. The divided structure of our national legislative branch is one of four major undemocratic flaws in the U.S. Constitution, the others being the Electoral College, Article V, which amends procedures, and state and local control of voting in elections. All were designed to protect the institution of slavery and to keep the power of government in the hands of elites. It is time to reevaluate the efficacy of representative government and to question why we have not seen the fundamental reforms—beyond the expansion of the franchise—required by modern times.

Politicians talk about empowering the people, but there has never been a plan offered to do that. On election day citizens give their power away and empower only the politicians. Even the twenty-four states with initiative laws do not properly empower citizens as legislators, since the initiative processes themselves are state-controlled and subject to the corrupting influence of unlimited political money.

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

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vote their self-interest.

Our democracy can and must e
perience a paradigm shift by bringir
the people into the operations
government as lawmakers.

*Mike Gravel*
CEO, The Democracy Foundation
U.S. Senator, 1969–81
Arlington, Va.

Richard Rosenfeld's case for abo
ishing the Senate, although corre
in its history, fails to account fo
the present realities. Rosenfel
lauds the "large and equal represer
tation" of the House of Represent
tives, whose members, he imagine
have a communion with the "ord
nary people" they represent. Y
this same House is subject to e
post facto redistricting by exact
the sort of tyrannical majority th
Founders sought to counterbalance

Only the "anti-democratic" Sen
ate, with its arcane filibuster rules-
that small, unrepresentative "pre
serve of white male aristocrats"-

ntly stands between the Bush inistration and its fellow Re- can majority in the "democrat- louse, not to mention many ex- ely unwise decisions on issues ng from the corporate-giveaway gy bill to the end of a woman's nal choice.

rthermore, Rosenfeld constructs -herring argument that the Sen- with its racist Trent Lotts, gave larence Thomas. But just think e thoughtful jurists Tom DeLay company would bestow upon us.

*Jensen*
a Fe, N.Mex.

ichard Rosenfeld argues that ll-state voters might support ishing the U.S. Senate because y, like all Americans, believe in ir representation, justice, equali- nd democracy."

s a small-state voter, I certainly ve in these virtues, which is why ose abolishing the Senate. I like Delaware senators Joseph Biden Tom Carper can protect me, at to some extent, from the political hinations of big-state representative n DeLay and his followers.

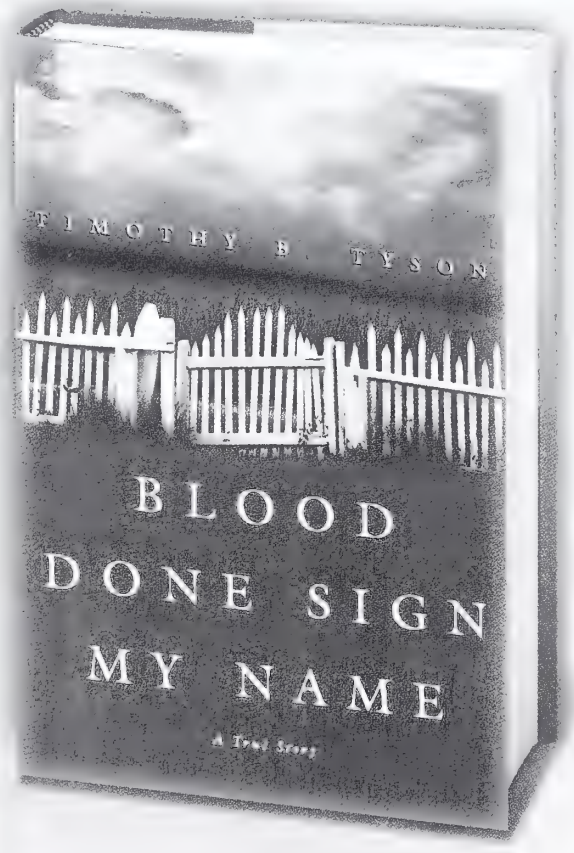
osenfeld proceeds to blame the ate for the skewed Electoral Col- vote that awarded the 2000 tion to Bush, but isn't the real lem that in forty-eight states the didate with the most votes is en- d to all of the state's electoral al- ent, regardless of how small the ning margin may be?

*rles D. Adams*
vark, Del.

lthough Richard Rosenfeld cor- ly assesses the Senate as undem- atic, he elides the fact that the use of Representatives is now n more so. The practice of gerry- ndering, unforeseen by the ners of the Constitution and now ned to a science by the use of dern statistical software, has le races in the House uncompeti- , assured a Republican majority the foreseeable future, and hed the parties to their extremes. e Senate, by comparison—free m the threat of redistricting—



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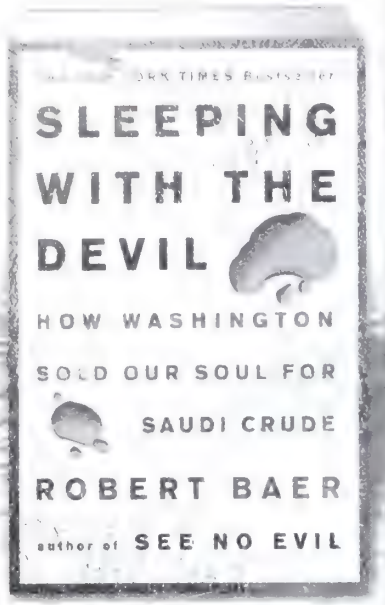
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seems a model of democratic compromise and expression of the popular will.

[illegible]
Cambridge, Mass.

The systematic redrawing of congressional districts to favor House incumbents compromises the vitality of our democracy more seriously than the small states' over-representation in the Senate. Since few seats in the House are in contention, party primaries usually determine who actually goes to Washington, and they tend to favor party regulars and zealots.

Adopting Iowa's method of redrawing the congressional districts based on geographic considerations could be achieved within the existing system, whereas amending the Constitution to eliminate the Senate, as Richard Rosenfeld suggests, would be difficult. If only a few more states adopted the Iowa system of redistricting, moderates would be elected and a more democratic Congress would be achieved.

*Peter Griffith*
Belmont, Mass.

Richard Rosenfeld's proposal is desirable but unrealistic. Any diminution of the Senate's power, even to the limited extent of reducing the Senate to an honorary role, would require, at a minimum, a constitutional amendment, which Rosenfeld concedes would not likely be attained. Indeed, imagine a Bill Frist, or even a George McGovern, casting the vote that would abolish his career. It behooves Rosenfeld to elaborate means. How does one dismantle the master's house with the master's tools?

*Chris Rank*
New York City

Richard Rosenfeld provides excellent insight into the inequities inherent in the form of democracy practiced in the United States. But an element missing from his analysis is the total lack of representation for the District of Columbia's [illegible],000 citizens.

Washington, D.C., is the only [illegible] cal jurisdiction in the country wh[illegible] initiatives and local budget are [illegible] ject to congressional oversight. E[illegible] though D.C. citizens pay full fed[illegible] taxes, serve in the armed forces, [illegible] are subject to all federal laws, t[illegible] do not have a say in how their t[illegible] are spent, even at the local le[illegible] The only Americans denied any r[illegible] resentation in the Senate, ot[illegible] than D.C. citizens, are convic[illegible] felons and children.

Before we can address the c[illegible] gressional inequalities enumera[illegible] by Rosenfeld, we must first addr[illegible] the embarrassing fact that the Un[illegible] ed States is the only democra[illegible] country in the world where re[illegible] dents of the capital city are den[illegible] the full rights of citizens. The ra[illegible] ing cry that helped spark the Am[illegible] ican Revolution continues to [illegible] heard in the very heart of the g[illegible] ernment: "Taxation without rep[illegible] sentation is tyranny."

*Anthony Wagner*
Washington, D. C.

In his indictment of the Unit[illegible] States Senate, Richard Rosenfeld [illegible] jects "tyranny of the majority" [illegible] "oxymoronic" and an "insidiou[illegible] concern. Our nation's Founders [illegible] sired democracy but did not wa[illegible] the young nation to become the fi[illegible] le stomping ground of demagogu[illegible] that Pericles' Athens had becom[illegible] The Senate was established as a sa[illegible] guard against this.

The majority needs no protecti[illegible] or vindication, simply because th[illegible] are the majority; government exi[illegible] expressly to protect the minori[illegible] who would otherwise be silenc[illegible] Mob rule is a stark reality, not[illegible] myth. The McCarthy trials a[illegible] Japanese internment are chilling e[illegible] amples of how a powerful major[illegible] can threaten our basic freedoms.

*Thomas Melvin*
New York City

Richard Rosenfeld repeatedly co[illegible] trasts the "nine largest states with[illegible] majority of the people" with t[illegible] "twenty-six smallest states with[illegible] majority in the Senate," noting th[illegible] while the senators from the form[illegible]

) voted 12–6 against Clarence nas's confirmation, the latter p's 28–24 vote in favor "gave nas his four-vote margin of vic- ' This is not exactly the tally of gle-minded voting bloc. The re- ing thirty senators, representing tenth through twenty-fourth est states, actually favored nas by a wider margin, 18–12. Rosenfeld intends to connect deas to reality, he could at least : us the insult of such transpar- tatistical distortions.

· *Thorngate*
:ago

chard Rosenfeld's essay calls to l the hilarious and rueful motto orist Dave Barry once proposed he U.S. Senate: "White male onaires working for you."

*Marting*
tle

enators may be "wealthy white aristocrats," but nearly half of House of Representatives' "fresh- " in 2002 were millionaires. urthermore, if citizens of less ulous states currently receive a roportionate share of federal ds, what would prevent the oppo- from occurring under a unicam- legislature? Eliminating the Sen- would merely allow the nine t populous states, constituting 50 percent of U.S. residents, to their own legislative agendas. t is more than just a "tyranny of majority." It is a precursor to the olution of our union.

*l Fruchbom*
v York City

## d and Blue in Black and ıite

he "ruin" sowed by the Republi- Party on the Great Plains ["Lie wn for America," Essay, April] be explained in part by a racial- l discourse of rights embraced by ıy white Americans after World r II. In the 1950s, the Republican ty urged white Americans to as- their right to low taxes and high perty values and to oppose liberal attempts to manufacture racial equality. Fifty years later, it is no longer acceptable to attack people of color openly, so conservative commentators now attack "liberal elites" who threaten the rights of the forgotten Red center.

The term "urban," in fact, has become a code word for non-white. What links together Red Americans is a category of "whiteness" that views urban demands for decent public education and social services as undercutting their rights to low taxes and high property values. The Republican Party's ability to tap into this discourse of rights has undermined the historical populism of the Great Plains by convincing many white Americans to vote their racial, rather than their class, interest.

*Victoria W. Wolcott*
Rochester, N.Y.

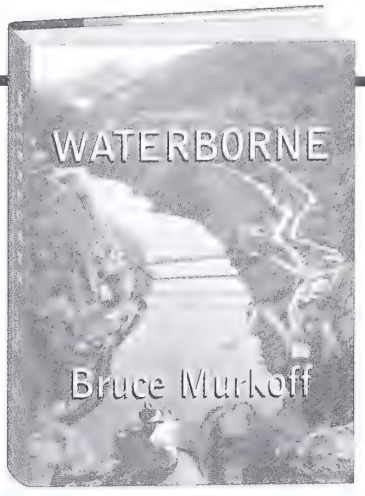
## Uncharitable Interpretation

Sheikh Khalid bin Mahfouz has never knowingly financed terrorism of any description, and he vehemently denies David Armstrong's allegation ["Charity Cases," Briefings, March]. He has never appeared on any U.S. government, U.S. Treasury, United Nations, or E.U. terrorist list. Furthermore, the United States authorities have never indicated formally or informally that he has been the subject of any investigation, let alone that he was a "suspected terrorist financier." Sheikh Khalid and his family abhor terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Readers of *Harper's Magazine* should visit the Bin Mahfouz family website, www.binmahfouz.info, which provides accurate information about Sheikh Khalid and his immediate family.

*Cherif Sedky*
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

## Editor's Note

The excerpt from Saadat Hasan Manto's "Third Letter to Uncle Sam" ["Each to His Own," Readings, June] first appeared in *Letters to Uncle Sam*, published in 2001 by Alhamra Publishers, in Islamabad, Pakistan.


**Critics across the country hail**

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(Art Winslow, *Chicago Tribune*)

**WATERBORNE**

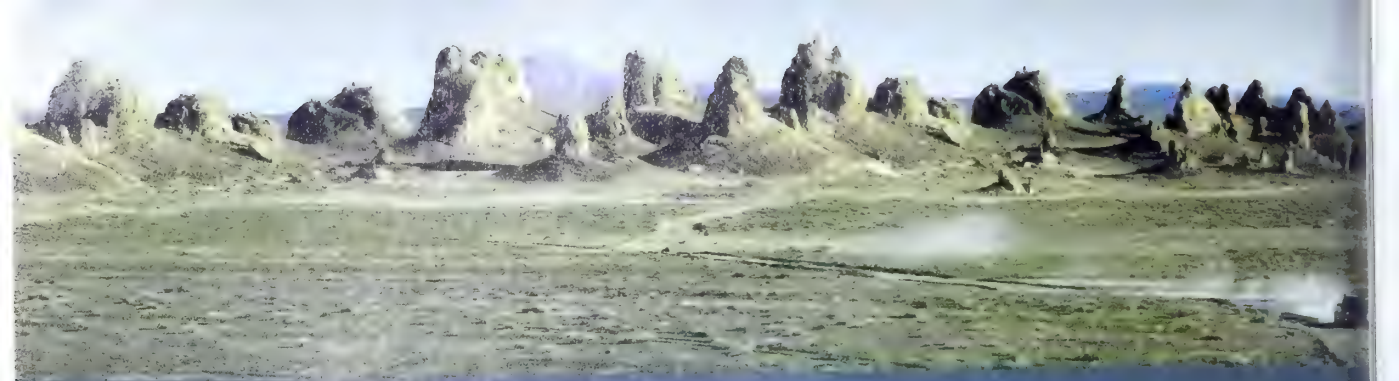
**"A formidable achievement"**
**says Kevin Baker in the *Wash. Post.***
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# NOTEBOOK

## Chasing the pot

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*ugh the object of being a Great Pow-*
*to be able to fight a Great War, the*
*way of remaining a Great Power is*
*to fight one.*

—A.J.P. Taylor

oker players who win more often
n they lose obey a rule of thumb
ressed in the phrase "never chase
pot." Were the United States to
ly the same policy to the cards it
been dealt in Iraq we would fold
hand sooner instead of later—
nout conditions or complaint, ac-
ting the loss as a fact beyond the
e of rescue by Commander James
d or the ace of hearts.

President George Bush apparent-
doesn't know the game (doesn't
w it or believes himself too rich
care what any of the numbers
an), and so in the news from
shington and Baghdad these
s we see the squandering of the
ntry's fortune (its wealth, the
es of its young men and women,
character and good name) on the
ity of a feckless commander in
ef who holds the equivalent of
e low and unmatched cards—a
krupt theory of world domina-
n, a collection of lurid snapshots
m the Abu Ghraib prison, a
ched military occupation of the
sopotamian desert, a delusionary
retary of defense, few allies in
stern Europe and none in the
gdoms of Islam. Undeterred by
cumstance, well pleased with his
rsona as the last, best hope of
nkind, the President smiles his
ndthrift and self-congratulating
ile and bets another Marine divi-
sion on the chance that it will save Mel Gibson's Jesus from a mob of bearded terrorists in Najaf.

I can understand why some people might find the performance terrifying, also why some other people might see it as darkly comic, but what I don't understand is why anybody continues to think that the man knows what he's doing. Presumably they're unacquainted with the lessons of the poker table; maybe they don't know that the President imagines himself in a game with John Wayne, Omar Sharif, and the Devil. Important personages in the news media, sources well informed and highly placed, acknowledge the mess that the noble heir has made of the American gamble in Iraq, but when I suggest that the President would do well to heed the advice of the historian A.J.P. Taylor, the tribunes on the jingo right accuse me of cowardice or treason (not a true American, no friend of our soldiers in the field); representatives of the conscience-stricken left draw my attention to the geopolitical reality of the international oil price and Woodrow Wilson's high-minded notion of making the world safe for democracy. But no matter what the provenience of the correction or the rebuke, all present in the chorus of responsible opinion (Senator John Kerry as well as President Bush) offer sentiments identical to the ones that for twelve years bankrolled the American losses in Vietnam—the United States must "stay the course," discharge its "moral responsibility," protect the Iraqi people from the scourge of civil war, maintain its "credibility" as the all-powerful wonder of the world. The sales pitch is as disingenuous now as it was in 1968:

*America must finish the job*

What job? Instead of going to Iraq with plans for a military occupation, we went with the script for a Hollywood western, and we have done as much as we know how to do—captured the bad guy, discovered that he didn't possess weapons of mass destruction, expended large quantities of ammunition, reduced to rubble a substantial weight of antiquated architecture, killed or maimed 4,000 American troops as well as an unlisted number of Iraqi civilians. Beginning and end of story, consistent with the plotline of *High Plains Drifter* and similar in both disposition and result to the American expeditions to Cuba and the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century, to Haiti in 1915 and 1994, to Vietnam in 1962–75.

Certainly we can do more of the same, but as to the construction of a democratic theme park on the banks of the Euphrates, we have neither a liking nor a talent for the enterprise. Of the books recently leading the *New York Times* bestseller list, at least six (among them those by Richard Clarke, Ron Suskind, John Dean, and Bob Woodward) speak to the Bush Administration's failure to comprehend, much less anticipate or address, the task described in the Pentagon's promotional brochures. The Washington aides-de-camp arranging the maps on the walls of the

White House Situation Awareness: to overlook the fact that the Americans are an [illegible] people, devoid of [illegible] of the state that might allow us to [illegible] hand and [illegible] imperial project serves the interest of the propertied classes, but the work must be performed [illegible] classes, and [illegible] ness the energy of the latter to the enthusiasms of the former. At about the same time that the Abu Ghraib prison photographs were making the rounds of the Internet, the apostles of freedom-loving blitzkrieg were acknowledging the need for another fifteen infantry divisions to stand watch for another four or five years over the investments of American capital in the oil fields of Basra and Kirkuk. The Pentagon doesn't have the troops, and if the opinion polls can be believed (popular support for the liberation of Iraq falling from 53 percent to 48 percent in the month of May) the American public isn't willing to spend the money or the time. Who then will finish the job? None other than the Iraqi people, currently identified (as were the rebels in the American revolution) as terrorists, detainees, foreign agents, enemy combatants.

*Moral responsibility*

The two words sound nicely together when presented to a television camera or to a conference sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute, but where is the meaning in either the adjective or the noun? How moral? Responsibility to what or to whom?

I know of no war described by its active participants as moral. Men go off to war for as many reasons as can be dressed up with a flag or a name for God; the horror of the battlefield translates the fine language into the savage instinct for survival, the military band music into the sound of dying animals. Consult the testimony of the witnesses to the killing at Verdun, Stalingrad, or Omaha Beach, and the voices of fast-receding conscience find nothing moral in the mass production of their own collective murder.

The American diplomatists of fifty years ago at least had the good grace not to mince words. George Kennan in the winter of 1948 circulated a memorandum to his associates at the State Department in which he made no attempt to conceal the motive of straightforward plunder behind the screens of Christian charity:

> We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population. . . . In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming.

The argument presupposed an American realpolitik strongmindedly turned away from what Kennan regarded as "unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standard and democratization."

Responsibility, the second word in the stock phrase, is as nonsensical as the first. The Bush Administration interprets the responsibility as one owing to its own stupidity, arrogance, and pride. The invasion of Iraq was mounted on the false premise that secular democracy (that happy, blessed state) could be forced at gunpoint upon Muslim nationalists faithful to the teachings of the Koran and more familiar with the punishment inflicted upon them by ten years of American economic sanctions than with the sayings of Thomas Jefferson. To excuse the subsequent fiasco of the military occupation, the President asks the American people for the willing suspension of their disbelief. Although characteristic of an administration that defines the acceptance of responsibility as a fool's errand and the admission of error as a sign of weakness, the stratagem comes up against a difficulty on which a younger and wiser John Kerry remarked soon after his return from the war in Vietnam, a war in which he'd served with distinction as a naval lieutenant but had come to regard as both irresponsible and immoral. Testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April 1971, he said, "How do you [illegible] a man to be the last man to die [illegible] mistake?" The Bush Administrati[illegible] answers the question with the dir[illegible] tive, "Tell the man a lie."

*America's credibility at stake*

Not America's credibility, the cre[illegible] ibility of the Bush Administrati[illegible] The phrase "American foreign po[illegible] cy" currently stands as a synonym f[illegible] cynicism and deceit, the credit rati[illegible] of a White House press release [illegible] sharply discounted nearly everywhe[illegible] in the world among people unaffilia[illegible] ed with the weapons industry, a la[illegible] enforcement agency, or the Republic[illegible] Party that in Israel the newspapers d[illegible] fend the cruelties inflicted on th[illegible] Palestinians in Gaza by saying, "Th[illegible] isn't America; the government did n[illegible] invent intelligence material nor e[illegible] aggerate the description of the thre[illegible] to justify their attack."

The Bush Administration stag[illegible] the violent overthrow of Saddam Hu[illegible] sein to prove that America's colos[illegible] military power established its right [illegible] rule the world from the gun platfor[illegible] of virtual omnipotence. During th[illegible] first weeks of the invasion the staff o[illegible] ficers at the White House congrat[illegible] lated one another on "the demonstr[illegible] tion effect" of their high-te[illegible] gladiatorial show in the cradle of ci[illegible] ilization, certain that the fireworks d[illegible] play would so shock and amaze tro[illegible] blesome regimes elsewhere in th[illegible] Middle East that no Arab in his or h[illegible] right mind would chance the risk [illegible] overt or covert defiance. Contrary [illegible] the expectations of the studio exec[illegible] tives in Washington, the events of th[illegible] last year have taught a different o[illegible] ject lesson, demonstrating the limits [illegible] American power and suggesting th[illegible] the Bush Administration's imperiali[illegible] policy amounts to little else except a[illegible] other name for terrorism—precisio[illegible] guided and digitally enhanced but ot[illegible] erwise similar in its objectives to th[illegible] action-movie sequence that destroy[illegible] Manhattan's World Trade Center. Th[illegible] apostles of "the new information orde[illegible] have been making the point for twe[illegible] ty years. The terrorist who blows up[illegible] train in Madrid enlists the complici[illegible] of CNN, and within an hour of con[illegible] mitting the atrocity, he holds [illegible] hostage the rage and despair of an a[illegible]

ce large enough to wreck a gov-
ıent. So also the scenes of street
ing in Fallujah and the exhibition
ıotographs from the Abu Ghraib
ın, seen within the hour by Amer-
prospective enemies everywhere
ıe Islamic world. The war on ter-
s a war of images, the firepower of
world's television cameras strik-
ın asymmetric balance against the
pons of mass destruction in the
tagon's arsenal of fear.

ike the rescue of Vietnam from
evil castle of Soviet Commu-
n, the rescue of Iraq from the
s of Arab jihad has borne out the
of unintended effects. Meant to
nish the world with the virtues of
ıocracy, the expedition to In-
hina taught a generation of
erican citizens to think of their
ı government as an oriental
ıotism. In Iraq we meant to ren-
futile both the theory and the
ctice of terrorism; what we have
ıe instead is to endow it with
omatic credentials, making credi-
the policies of blind assassination.

*ure is not an option*

Define the American purpose in
q as the transformation of the
b Middle East into a democratic
estate development, or the seiz-
of what President Bush fondly
cribes as "an historic opportunity
change the world," and failure is
only option. What is at issue is
degree of failure, and whether
United States can earn a mea-
e of respect (from an increasingly
ge body of its own citizens as well
rom the Iraqi people) by depart-
, preferably before the end of the
r, without attempting to secure
perimeters of a puppet govern-
nt or a client state. Every day
ıt American troops continue to
or be killed (for whatever reason
no matter whose orders) adds to
sum of anger and resentment
tain to make more difficult the
ıntry's struggle with its own tribal
treds, nationalist politics, reli-
us zeal. We cannot know if our
hdrawal will incite civil war, or,
uch a war occurs, whether it will
d to a worse or more far reaching
ult than the one assured by our
tended military presence. Our Washington geopoliticians wrongly forecast a massive bloodletting in Vietnam after our escape from the roof of the embassy in Saigon. Probably we won't like the government that the Iraqis choose for themselves—whether a secular state in control of its own oil reserves or an Islamic theocracy unfriendly to Israel—but if we mean what we say about democratic principle and free elections, on what ground do we prevent them from choosing it? Under the auspices of the United Nations, we can provide money and medicine, also roads, sewers, electrification, and copies of *The Federalist Papers,* but not a constitution similar to the one that we imposed on Cuba in 1901, which reserved our right to "intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence."

In the meantime we can hope that John Kerry, the presidential candidate, remembers the question asked by John Kerry, the naval lieutenant. For the time being he appears to have forgotten what he once knew about lost wars and dishonest advertising slogans. His campaign speeches echo the sentiments of his opponent (job to do, moral responsibility, more American troops backing the currency of Iraqi independence); whether offered in good faith or deemed politically expedient, the dead language condemns him to the prison of the past, to the belief that America's "national security" depends on the weight of its military power. The Bush Administration's gamble in Iraq has proved the error of the hypothesis. The country is less secure now than it was a year ago, the multiplication of our enemies outpacing our production of lying press releases and our manufacture of high-performance artillery shells.

The summer election season presents Kerry with the chance to find his way out of the hall of old mirrors, possibly to discover an exit strategy in the idea that our national security stems from the character and the intelligence of the American people—i.e., from the investment in education, health care, our own infrastructure and environment, not from the chasing of the country's fortune into the mouth of omnivorous and never-ending war. ■




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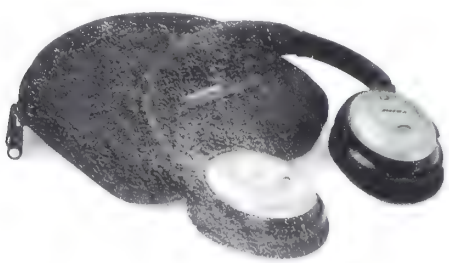
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# HARPER'S INDEX

eks the Patriot Act allowed the government this year to delay the ACLU's announcement of a suit over the Act itself : 3
onds it took a Maryland consultant last winter to pick a Diebold voting machine's lock and remove its memory card : 10
mber of states where a shift of no more than three seats this fall could change party control of a legislative chamber : 23
Percentage of state legislative seats that Democrats controlled in 1980 and today, respectively : 60, 50
Last year in which deaths due to terrorism in Israel and the Occupied Territories exceeded those in Kashmir : 2001
Percentage of deaths due to terrorism last year that took place in South Asia : 49
Percentage change since 2002 in the annual number of attacks by pirates on ships worldwide : +20
Estimated number of guns that the U.S.-led force in Haiti has confiscated since Aristide's departure last February : 100
Months it took the force to start a program offering cash for tips leading to weapons seizures : 2
tio of deaths of U.S. contractors worldwide in the last three months to those between April and September last year : 2:1
Value of the "political risk insurance" that the U.S. government is providing two private investors in Iraq : $30,000,000
Number of U.S. companies whose applications for such insurance are pending : 34
Estimated percentage of U.S. corporations that paid no federal taxes between 1996 and 2000 : 61
Percentage change between 2001 and 2002 in the number of Teamster officials earning six-figure salaries : +20
Number of publications on women's rights that the Labor Department has removed from its website since 1999 : 25
Number of days this year that the Small Business Administration's largest loan program shut down for lack of funds : 8
Percentage increase in the SBA's travel budget requested by the White House last year : +107 (see page 79)
Percentage of his salary Minnesota senator Mark Dayton spends on bus trips for seniors buying drugs in Canada : 100
Ratio of U.S. and Canadian spending on pharmaceuticals last year to the amount the rest of the world spent : 31:32
Average amount an American spent on pharmaceuticals in 2002 : $202.81
Annual spending on the Marshall Plan, per European it was meant to serve : $96.45
Amount the United States allocated this year for Iraq's reconstruction, per Iraqi : $727.27
Minimum number of prisoners under the age of 17 or over the age of 70 held by coalition forces in Iraq last April : 79
Minimum portion of Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison destroyed by May 2003 : ⅕
Amount the U.S. spent partially reconstructing it : $1,900,000
umber of times after prison-abuse photos aired in April that the President boasted of freeing Iraq of torture chambers : 13
Amount NBC's parent company, General Electric, stands to earn from Iraq's reconstruction : $600,000,000
Price of a bleepinator, a device for TV broadcasters that "surgically removes indecent words and phrases" : $9,995
Number of individual "songs" for sale in Apple's iTunes Music Store that consist of utter silence : 17
Percentage change in Mattel's first-quarter earnings last winter, when Barbie and Ken's "break-up" was announced : –73
ercentage by which average earnings of a major U.S. film with no sex in 2003 exceeded those of one with graphic sex : 120
Average number of "smoking incidents" per hour in major U.S. films in 1950 and 2002, respectively : 10.7, 10.9
tio of ambient fine-particle emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles to those from cooking meat in Houston in summer : 5:4
Days after McDonald's CEO died of a heart attack last April that the firm's ex-CEO for Japan did the same : 2
Years after symptoms of his deranging genetic disorder appeared that King George III held the throne in England : 56
Average inches by which a British man's height fell short of an American man's in the eighteenth century : 3.1
Average inches by which an American man's height falls short of a British man's today : 0.4
Number of fried chocolate sandwiches served at a British hotel chain in April after their debut : 1,256
ast year in which French frogs were served at the Brotherhood of the Frog Thigh Tasters' annual fair in Vittel, France : 1977

*Figures are adjusted for inflation and are the latest available as of May 2004. Sources are listed on page 94.*
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# READINGS

[Manifesto]

## EVIDENT TRUTHS

*The following was adapted from* The Second Bill of Rights, *by Cass R. Sunstein, published by Basic Books this month. Sunstein is a professor of law at the University of Chicago.*

On January 11, 1944, Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered his eleventh State of the Union address. Because he was ill with a cold, he did not make the customary trip to Capitol Hill to appear in person. Instead, he spoke to the nation by radio; it was the first and only time a State of the Union address was also a Fireside Chat.

With a victorious end to the war on the horizon, Roosevelt feared an onset of national complacency. "I do not think that any of us Americans can be content with mere survival," he cautioned. The country's objective rather should be understood, he suggested, in the context of security, and he proposed that the term meant not only "safety from attacks by aggressors" but also "economic security, social security, moral security." All across the country, Roosevelt could be heard declaring that "essential to peace is a decent standard of living for all individuals," and that "freedom from fear is eternally linked with freedom from want."

He went on to argue for a sweeping campaign against social and economic vulnerability. "In our day," he said, certain "economic truths have become . . . self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights." These rights were as follows:

> the right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation;
>
> the right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
>
> the right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
>
> the right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
>
> the right of every family to a decent home;
>
> the right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;
>
> the right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;
>
> the right to a good education.

These rights, he asserted, "spell security." As Roosevelt saw it, broad recognition of this second bill would be continuous with the war effort.

Roosevelt envisioned the second bill as a set of public commitments by and for the citizenry, much like the Declaration of Independence. He wagered that the country—still reeling from an economic calamity, together with a homeland attack and the ensuing overseas commitment—would be willing to extend guarantees of minimal social and economic security to all its inhabitants.

His conviction benefited from historical precedent, as the Constitution had been significantly altered after the Civil War. For the

first eighty years of its existence, the Constitution had been imagined as a safeguard against federal iniquity, but the Civil War demonstrated that the federal government could be a source of protection against state power. This resulted in the Civil War amendments—Amendments Thirteen, Fourteen, and Fifteen—which prohibit slavery and ban states from depriving any person of life, liberty, or property "without due process of law" and from denying any person "the equal protection of the laws." The Fourteenth Amendment is now understood to apply the Bill of Rights to state governments.

Although the Civil War amendments did not ultimately enshrine the kind of social and economic rights that Roosevelt sought, the issue was hotly debated at the time. The South had more than 4 million newly freed slaves who lacked land and shelter, and radical Republicans argued that the political freedom of the former slaves would be meaningless without a corresponding measure of economic freedom. In September 1865, the Republican leader Thaddeus Stevens contended that the government should seize 400 million acres from the wealthiest Southerners and transfer 40 acres to each newly freed adult man, but his proposal was successfully challenged as a violation of property rights.

For Roosevelt and the New Dealers, history had borne out the ineffectiveness of political freedom in delivering freedom from want, but they rejected constitutional reform as a way of instituting the second bill. Their approach was consistent with the interpretive strategy of the New Deal, which avoided official amendments in favor of using political processes and constitutional interpretation to move legislation in a favorable direction.

The viability of this approach was suggested in the 1956 Supreme Court ruling *Griffin* v. *Illinois*, in which the Court held that the constitutional guarantee of "equal protection" requires states to provide free trial transcripts to people appealing their criminal convictions. In defending its practice of charging for these documents, Illinois claimed that there had been no discrimination, as poor and rich alike were asked to pay for transcripts. The Court responded that "a law nondiscriminatory on its face may be grossly discriminatory in its operation. . . . In criminal trials a State can no more discriminate on account of poverty than on account of religion, race, or color."

The Court built on *Griffin* in its 1963 ruling *Gideon* v. *Wainwright*. This decision, one of the most famous in American law, effectively made good on the constitutional commitment to the assistance of counsel by ruling that states are required to pay for defense counsel in criminal cases.

In 1966 the Supreme Court took a further step in the direction of social and economic rights by striking down a Virginia poll tax, ruling that "wealth, like race, creed, or color, is not germane to one's ability to participate intelligently in the electoral process." It added that lines "drawn on the basis of wealth or property, like those of race," are "disfavored." As if to underline the novelty of what it was doing, the Court stressed that the Constitution and its "equal protection" clause are "not shackled to the political theory of a particular era." Notions of equality under the Constitution, the Court asserted, "do change."

If a fee requirement can be discriminatory,

[Enigma]

## FAIR AND BALANCED

*From a May 4 editorial in the Fox River Valley, Wisconsin,* Post-Crescent. *The editors subsequently explained that their intention had not been to "beat the drum" for President Bush but that they merely had found it "curious" that the letters to the editor were "mostly one-sided."*

Letters to the editor are a way to take the political and social temperature of the Valley. A well-written letter allows readers to ponder different points of view. At best, they should offer a full spectrum of beliefs and topics.

Recently, though, as the race for president heats up, we've been dealing with this quandary: How can we balance the perspectives and topics of our letters when many of our submissions have been coming only from one side?

We've been getting more letters critical of President Bush than those that support him. We're not sure why, nor do we want to guess. But in today's increasingly polarized political environment, we would prefer our offering to put forward a better sense of balance.

Since we depend upon you, our readers, to supply our letters, that goal can be difficult. We can't run letters that we don't have.

If you would like to help us "balance" things out, send us a letter, make a call, or punch out an email. We'd love to hear from you.



COURTESY ENGHOLM ENGELHORN GALERIE VIENNA

Am Ende Feierabend (Vers. II), *by Hendrik Krawen. An exhibition of his work will be held next January at Engholm Engelhorn Galerie, in Vienna.*

then might not any fees for the fulfillment of basic needs be brought into constitutional question? What about fees for education, medical care, or housing? The idea that seemingly neutral fees are discriminatory could have extremely broad implications.

In its 1969 *Shapiro* v. *Thompson* decision, the Court struck down state laws imposing waiting periods on the receipt of welfare benefits by new arrivals, citing the constitutional right to travel: waiting periods would "penalize" impoverished travelers and thus violate their constitutional right to go from one state to another. The ramifications of this conclusion are considerable. Wouldn't a state with no welfare programs be penalizing travelers in just the same way? If a state provided welfare benefits significantly below those of its neighbors, might that penalize travelers too? By ruling that states had denied "welfare aid upon which may depend the ability of the families to obtain the very means to subsist—food, shelter, and other necessities of life," the Court made constitutionally relevant the special needs of the poor.

The Supreme Court went even further a few years later, in *Memorial Hospital* v. *Maricopa County*. Arizona required a year's residence in a county as a condition for receiving nonemergency medical care at county expense. A majority of the Court ruled that it would be "odd" to conclude that a state must afford a poor person "welfare assistance to keep him from the discomfort of inadequate housing or the pangs of hunger but could deny him the medical care necessary to relieve him from the wheezing and gasping for breath that attend his illness." On the basis of this language, one could understand the Court to be suggesting that the Constitution requires states to provide a degree of free medical care.

In *Goldberg* v. *Kelly*, the Court, ruling that New York State was required to provide hearings before removing people from welfare rolls, determined that welfare was indeed a form of constitutional "property," and therefore protected under the "due process" clause. The decision emphasized the "brutal need" of those who depend on welfare benefits. In an extraordinary passage, the Court noted that "from its founding the Nation's basic commitment has been to foster the dignity and well-being of all persons within its borders. We have come to recognize that forces not within the control of the poor contribute to their poverty," and continued: "Welfare, by meeting the basic demands of subsistence, can help bring within the reach of the poor the same opportunities that are available to others to participate meaningfully in the life of the community. . . . Public assistance, then, is not mere charity, but a means to 'promote

the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.'" In a key footnote, the Court wrote: "Much of the existing wealth of this country takes the form of rights that do not fall within traditional common-law concepts of property."

Indeed, after the New Deal, the distinction between rights and privileges was increasingly difficult to maintain. As Roosevelt well understood, property rights as we now enjoy them exist only because governments are willing to create and protect them. How are welfare benefits any different? It is implausible, the Court found, to treat welfare benefits as fundamentally different from conventional property.

These arguments had considerable force, and by the late 1960s the Court seemed to be moving toward recognition of a robust set of social and economic rights. The pieces of Roosevelt's second bill were slowly shifting into place.

Then, on November 5, 1968, Richard Nixon narrowly won the presidential election, with 43.4 percent of the popular vote to Hubert Humphrey's 42.3 percent. Nixon promptly appointed four justices strongly opposed to the idea that the Constitution includes social and economic guarantees. By 1974 the Court had backed off, and no further legal safeguards were instituted for Americans who lacked "food, shelter, and other necessities of life."

If the election had been held two weeks later, Humphrey, whose popularity was surging, might well have won. And had Humphrey won, the American Constitution might well now be understood to protect social and economic rights for the nation's citizens.

Today, there is a firm international consensus on many of the rights Roosevelt listed, including the right to education, the right to social security, the right to be free from monopoly, possibly even the right to a job. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, has been accepted by most nations in the world, including the United States. Indeed, President Roosevelt's speeches put the United States on record in favor of social and economic rights in a way that made American support for the declaration inevitable. Even so, it provides a dramatic contrast to the American Constitution.

The declaration proclaims that "everyone" has a "right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." The declaration also provides a right to education and proclaims that everyone "has a right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment." It recognizes a right "to equal pay for equal work," a right "to form and to join trade unions," and a right to "just and favorable remuneration ensuring . . . an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection."

All over the globe, modern constitutions follow the Universal Declaration in the social and economic rights they recognize, sometimes us-

[Testimony]

## THE JUDGE RESTS

*The following affidavit was filed in Ontario Superior Court last year in support of an appeal by Andras Deak. On July 18, 2001, Justice Ayres Couto sentenced Deak to two years' probation for mischief and criminal harassment; the conviction was overturned last October.*

I, Kim Schofield, hereby make oath and say as follows:

THAT I am a Barrister and Solicitor and a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada;

THAT I was the Applicant's trial counsel and, as such, have knowledge of the matters herein deposed;

THAT during the Applicant's trial, during the evidence of the Complainant, the learned trial Judge, Justice Couto, fell asleep;

THAT at the time I noticed this happen, I turned to my assistant to ensure that I perceived this accurately. She agreed that it appeared that his Honour had fallen asleep;

THAT I then turned to the Crown attorney, Ms. Strasberg, to ensure that she was aware that this was happening. She confirmed that His Honour appeared to be asleep. We decided that I would drop a copy of *Tremears Criminal Code* in order to wake His Honour. I dropped the Code and His Honour was visibly stirred from his slumber;

THAT at the time I was not sure of what to do, and decided to proceed, as did Ms. Strasberg.

ing its precise words. The constitution of Finland states that "everyone shall be guaranteed . . . the right to basic subsistence in the event of unemployment, illness, and disability and during old age as well as at the birth of a child or the loss of a provider." The constitution of Spain states, "To citizens in old age, the public authorities shall guarantee economic sufficiency through adequate and periodically updated pensions." Similarly, the constitutions of Ukraine, Romania, Syria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Russia, and Peru recognize some or all of the social and economic rights catalogued by Franklin Roosevelt.

Other nations recognize social and economic guarantees as goals but not legally enforceable rights. Of sixty-four national constitutions recently studied from the perspective of human rights, forty-seven were found to offer a right to social security; fifty-one provide the right to education; and nearly a third provide a right to housing and health care. The strongest commitments to economic rights are found in Portugal, Brazil, Poland, Finland, Uruguay, and Paraguay, and the weakest in Austria, New Zealand, Singapore, Trinidad, and the United States.

The United States did, however, help to write the interim Iraqi constitution, which was celebrated by the Bush Administration though it announces in Article XIV: "The individual has the right to security, education, health care, and social security," and goes on to say that the nation and its government "shall strive to provide prosperity and employment opportunities to the people."

Americans are unambiguously and even unalterably committed to some kind of social-security system, whatever the current reform proposals from the White House. This commitment is on a par with the commitment to protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, even though only the latter is part of the formal Bill of Rights. When asked directly, in fact, most Americans support Roosevelt's second bill, and even say that many of its provisions should be seen as rights. The public's commitment to actual policy, however, is often partial and ambivalent. Much of the time, and especially under the current administration, the United States seems to have embraced a confused and pernicious form of individualism, which endorses rights of private property and freedom of contract but claims to distrust "government intervention" and insists that people must fend for themselves.

This so-called individualism is an incoherent tangle of confusions. It was definitively re-

[Faux Pas]

## OUTSIDE THE BOX

*From cover letters sent by job applicants, clients, and vendors to Killian & Company, an advertising firm based in Chicago, over the last four years.*

It is my desire to develop and generate the revolving scheme to filter the consuming public in.

Today is the first day of my life. I am terrified of the all-out approach I sense in my spirit. However, I am not scared enough to let it stop me. I will sacrifice anything but my God (morals) and my family.

Originally from Vietnam, I also offer expertise in the following areas: Asian cuisine: I deliver in-box or out-of-the-box; traditional massage: I satisfy Client above their expectation; karaoke singing: but also a lot of listening, listening, and listening to Client. Would you like to taste any of those?

I want to obtain a deeper understanding of how Advertising firms.

At school he is a student of advertising, on the streets of Chicago he is a student of culture and memes. This is Advertising, finding that elusive why. Charles understand the nuances of culture, the relativity of trends, the impact of memes. He is all of us and one of us, he is the Cultural Chameleon.

Who's better to spew out incite, than a college senior?

Looking for a full creative person for your team? . . . Deep Studies on movies. Prepared for the totally unexpected advertising and Selling Blasting.

I want to expose my creative ideas for a good agency not just that the agency is good rather to build a image of quality. Thus, I am offering you this small note of request to give me a break by providing projects of

a. Creating concept for TV Commercials
b. Print media
c. Hoarding

Hi; I'm from Ukraine, and wery interesting about profi advertisment. I have some interesting and absolutely new ideas (for example about car brands) but in our fuking (sorry) country its unreal to do own bussiness. May be you want to work with us? Its will be really good.

roots in America's founding period. Roosevelt knew that the economically insecure, the poor, depend on government protection, and he remarked as early as 1932 that the exercise of property rights "might so interfere with the rights of the individual that the Government, without whose assistance the property rights could not exist, must intervene, not to destroy [private] initiative but to protect it." The confusions that Roosevelt identified have had a rebirth since the early 1980s. Much of the political discourse since then has been marked by specious small-government versus big-government rhetoric and a foolish anti-government mantra. This atmosphere has been particularly ill-suited to a debate on the issue of formalizing social and economic rights, and has produced a false and ahistorical idea of American culture and history both at home and abroad that must be corrected before its mindless repetition makes it a reality.

Conditions now are starkly different from those under which Roosevelt addressed a nation bound in solidarity over recovering from the Depression and fighting a world war. But at a time in which national security is again threatened, the parallels are striking. Indeed, politicians in several countries continue to emphasize the importance of providing decent opportunities and minimal security for all. John Kerry has repeatedly insisted that health care is a right, not a privilege, and as such should be available to every American. And in March 2003, while the United States was bringing the curtain down on one war and setting the stage for another, a proposed constitutional amendment, H.J. Res. 35, was referred to the House Judiciary Committee:

> 1. Every citizen has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment.
>
> 2. Every citizen, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
>
> 3. Every citizen who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for themselves and their family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
>
> 4. Every citizen who works has the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of their interests.

Remarkable though this is, the realization of Roosevelt's ideals need not involve the upheaval occasioned by campaigns for constitutional amendment. Nor need it be tied to any one political action save the exercise of every citizen's right to vote. If we believe, as Roosevelt did, that threats from our enemies provide an occasion for renewing our sense of the rights of all people, including those of our own citizens, why not also agree that these rights are, properly understood, fundamental to the concept of security?

The United States is facing new threats to its security not only in the form of a guerrilla war in Iraq and a heightened fear of terrorism at home but also in the growing gap between our richest and our poorest citizens, the unavailability of education and health care to our poor and minority communities, and the disappearance of thousands of people from welfare rolls without their reappearance on employment registers. Surely these are among the greatest threats the country has ever faced. It is long past time to complete Roosevelt's unfinished revolution, to insist on a principled commitment to real universal security.

[Billets-doux]

## THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

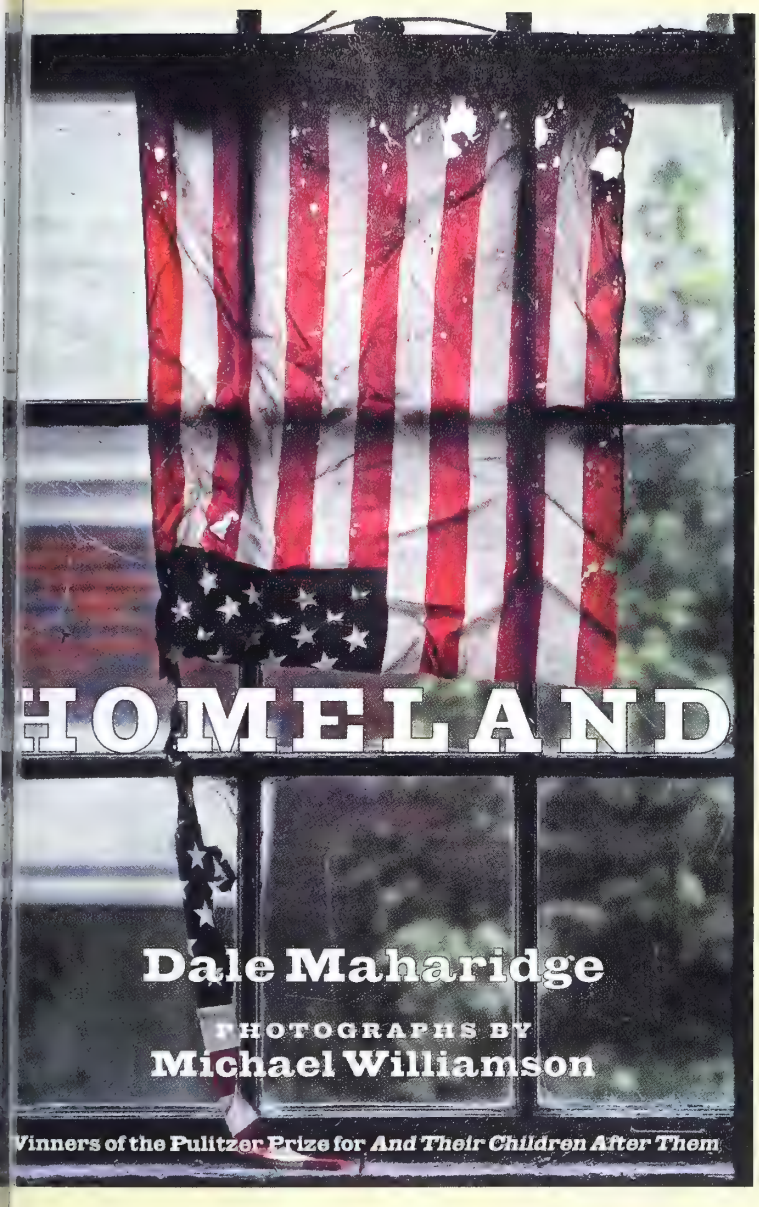
*From entries to Who Wants to Be a First Lady? a contest held by LiberalHearts.com and Politics-NH.com last fall to find a wife for Dennis Kucinich, the Democratic presidential candidate from Ohio. During a November 6 debate, Kucinich announced that he was looking for "a dynamic, outspoken woman who was fearless in her desire for peace in the world and for universal single-payer health care." Last December he went on a date with Gina Maria Santore, the thirty-four-year-old New Jersey resident who won the contest.*

JENNA, Seattle

MAKIN' THE WHITE HOUSE RIGHTEOUS IN '04 WITH YA BABE! YOU KNOW IT DARLIN'. i'd love to change the world with you . . . me and the kiniky! i sit at the edge of my seat as a football fan would watching "the big game" when you speak. i told my mom about the contest and that i was sending in an entry. she chuckled and said "oh no . . . watch out."

MARGIE, Milton, Wisconsin

Dennis, there are thousands of us that are in love with you and would give our left arm to have a few moments alone with you. That's our fantasy! In Madison I heard you at the Orpheum and then at the Democratic Convention in Milwaukee, where I was able to shake your hand. It was cold, which seemed impossible after such a fiery speech!




"A hopeful as well as heartbreaking work." –Studs Terkel, author most recently of *Hope Dies Last*

"By vividly depicting real-life stories, Dale Maharidge has breathed life, drama, and emotion into the complex civil liberties issues that have faced Americans since 9/11. Until reading *Homeland* I never realized how heartbreaking, inspiring, and compelling individual struggles about personal freedom are in modern-day America." –Danny Goldberg, chairman and CEO, Artemis Records, and author of *Dispatches from the Culture Wars: How the Left Lost Teen Spirit*

# for which it stands

"... a provocative call for American self-assessment. ... *[Homeland]* emerges as a sensitive, heartfelt examination of a wounded America whose wounds existed long before the terrorist attacks." –*Publishers Weekly*

"This book is an impassioned field report on the conflicts between haves and have-not, believers and nonbelievers, and, most importantly, those who accept authority and those who question it." –Dave Cohn, Washington, DC, editor of the *Nation*

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SEVEN STORIES

[illegible]

I am the owner of [illegible] and I have attended in astrology: the stars say we're meant to be. Some call me a Nubian princess, and people always ask me if I'm foreign, but I've lived in the United States ever since I was three years old and I think I'm a citizen. I think it would be [illegible] to have a first lady with a [illegible] I love Cartman folk music [illegible] movie is *South Park*! Older men are always surprised to hear my actual age [illegible] my sophisticated demeanor and refined [illegible] manner.

[illegible], Connecticut

I'm an only child of immigrant parents, who has never had a salary above the poverty level and am currently fighting for the house my father built against the Title 19 caseworker who wants to make me homeless to pay for my mother to be in a lousy nursing home. I'm supposed to be an illustrator but put my career on hold to take care of ailing elderly parents. I used to be a vegetarian but cannot afford to be one.

CHRISTINE, Tampa

Are our goals the same? I want to create a Love Nest that is off-the-grid and sustainable. A sociable place that people could visit and learn from and use as a model to create the kind of world we are all envisioning. Rose Garden to Organic Vegetable Garden!

KATE, Los Angeles

i am a student at an art school in los angeles. my major is photography and media, but i also make films, draw, do installations, dance, have a band where i sing, play some guitars and keyboards, etc. the photo is of me at the no war in iraq oscar protest. i dressed in a gown, wig, and tiara and covered myself in blood, cuts, and bullet holes. so, i'm a little young (twenty-one), but we are all leftists here, let's not be ageists!

JESSICA, California

My family's spent summers in NH for over three decades, and now both of my parents live there full time. I wouldn't turn down a free ticket home to visit my family, and in fact would enter a contest to win one. Until today, I'd not even heard of Congressman Kucinich. I have no idea what his platform is generally, nor where he stands on specific individual issues, like the right to choose, the death penalty, our nation's economic and foreign policies, etc. I have no idea how old he is, nor what he looks like. I don't know any of his personal history. All that said, I feel that I'm as qualified as any other contender here to be his First Lady. Heck, I'm more qualified: I'm young, have never been married, have no children, am Ivy League educated, am self-supporting, and drive a really cute car.

CAROL, Delaware

As a woman, I am looking for a monogamous and loving friendship/relationship/and more with a sexy settled man who is as busy as I am. But a man not too busy to want to spend some quality time getting to know each other and keeping the home fires burning between our busy schedules. Dennis, remember a successful relationship takes two individuals committed to enjoying life and each other, where trust, mutual respect, understanding, and communication play an important role in smoothing out any rough spots that come along the way. I enjoy snow skiing, museums, travel, art, music, ancient ruins, tarot cards, and romantic adventures with an exciting companion. Dennis, could that be you?

[Disclosure]

# THE TIME OF KILLING

*From an April 5 interview with Omar Bakri Muhammad, a suspected member of Al Qaeda and head of Al Muhajiroun, a radical Islamic group based in London. Of the eight suspects arrested on March 30 for planning to execute a terrorist attack in London, seven are known to have been Muhammad's protégés. The interview was conducted by Paulo Moura and appeared in the April 18 edition of* Público, *a Portuguese daily.*

*Your home is full of books. Are all of them about Islam?*

Yes. All of my six thousand books. Except for that one [*British Law*], which was given to me, but it's simply pathetic.

*How can one live in the United Kingdom without accepting British law?*

It's forbidden for Muslims to obey man-made laws.

*You say you want to see the Islamic flag flying at Number 10 Downing Street. Is that a dream or an agenda?*

I believe that one day it will happen, because this is my country. I like living here. God said: "Don't live among nonbelievers unless you call for their conversion."



Restless #2, *by Paolo Arao, from the series "The Wrestlers." Arao's work is currently on display at the Jeff Bailey Gallery, in New York City.*

*Were the 9/11 attacks legitimate?*

Sure they were. America attacked Somalia, Sudan, Iraq. If you attack any Muslim in any place, it's like you attack them all in all places. They have the right to retaliate, but not where they are under the covenant of security. A Muslim can never be involved in a terrorist attack in the country where he is living legally.

*So a Muslim from the U.K. can't carry out a terrorist attack here, but if he goes to a foreign country. . .*

That is another story.

*What could justify the deliberate killing of thousands of innocent civilians?*

We don't make a distinction between civilians and non-civilians, innocents and non-innocents. Only between Muslims and nonbelievers. And the life of a nonbeliever has no value. There's no sanctity in it.

*But there were Muslims among the victims.*

According to Islam, Muslims who die in attacks will be accepted immediately into paradise as martyrs. As for the others, it is their problem.

*Is there any difference between incurring civilian casualties in attacking a military target and attacking civilians as a target?*

We are not hypocrites. We don't say: "I'm sorry, it was a mistake." We say: "You deserved it." We assume the purpose is to kill as many people as possible, to spread the terror, so that people in the West think: "Look what happened to us!" and realize that every time they send beautiful Apache helicopters and F16 aircraft, the purpose is also to kill women and children. How many people died in Afghanistan? They carpet bombed day and night, and a number was never released. One hundred sixty thousand? Who were those people? In Madrid were there 196 or 197? They were counted one by one.

*Is terror the only way to make people aware of this?*

Terror is the language of the twenty-first century. If I want something, I terrorize you to achieve it. To support George Bush is a kind of terrorism. To support Al Qaeda is the same. Everybody is involved. Every Muslim is a terrorist, every non-Muslim is a terrorist. This is "the time of killing."

[Secrets]

# ~~OUR~~ MAN IN CHILE

*The following report was created in 1975 by the Defense Intelligence Agency and declassified in 1999 by the Clinton Administration. Last November, in response to a FOIA request, the DIA re-released the document, but with significant portions reclassified. The Pinochet brief appeared in full in Peter Kornbluh's* The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability, *published last year by The New Press. The newly redacted portions are shown below with strike-through. Last year the Bush Administration generated more than 14 million classified files, up from 8.6 million in 2001.*

NAME: Gen. Augusto Pinochet Ugarte

SIGNIFICANCE: ~~Gen. Pinochet, an intelligent, ambitious, professionally competent, and experienced Infantry officer, is widely admired and respected by fellow officers.~~ He became President and the strongest member of the Government Junta following the government of Marxist-Socialist Salvador Allende Gossens. The Junta abolished Congress and all political parties but claims to be moving toward a return to democracy. It is most concerned with rebuilding Chile, especially the economy; ~~obtaining foreign arms purchases and making other preparations against the threat of war with Peru; and improving Chile's world image regarding human rights.~~

WIFE: Lucía Hieriart Rodríguez de Pinochet; born about 1926; of French ancestry; Roman Catholic; ~~charming, attractive, socially at ease; family is very close.~~

DESCRIPTION: Caucasian. Large build, dark brown hair, green eyes, oval face, fair complexion; has a mustache; wears glasses for reading; quiet; ~~mild-mannered, very businesslike. Very honest, hard working, dedicated. A devoted, tolerant husband and father; lives very modestly. Drinks scotch and pisco sours; smokes cigarettes; likes parties. Sports interests are fencing, boxing, and horseback riding.~~ Member of the Geographic Society of Chile. He is well known as a military geographer and has authored three geography books, at least one of which is used as a secondary-school textbook. ~~Enjoys discussing world military problems and would respond to a frank, master-man approach.~~

It is predicted in the divine text. Muhammad said: "I am the prophet of mercy," but he also said: "I am the prophet of massacre." The word "terrorism" is not new among Muslims. Muhammad said: "I am the prophet who laughs when he's killing the enemy." It is not only a question of killing. It's laughing while we are killing.

*Do you believe there will be a big attack in London?*
It's inevitable. Several attacks are being prepared by several groups. I regret that, because the first thing the government will do after that is to deport me, along with my family.

*Many people say you belong to Al Qaeda.*
It's an honor that people are saying that. They don't associate me with belly dancers or homosexuals but with the best people that ever existed, after the Prophet and his companions. Nobody had ever dreamed of such a deed, to launch airplanes against two skyscrapers. Al Qaeda is not a group one can join.

*But they have cells in Europe.*
They have cells with a mission. And the missions are always suicide missions. That's why when we uncover a cell it no longer exists.

*When a group wants to stage an attack, do they contact Al Qaeda?*
No. People are recruited. They stay in sleeper cells, behaving normally, with low profiles, waiting for a mission. It will be their first and last mission. That's why it's impossible for the police to infiltrate Al Qaeda.

*How many members does Al Qaeda have?*
About 11,000. They gather, they spread all over the world, and they gather together again. If they didn't recruit, they would disappear, because their destiny is death. It's time for Bin Laden himself and his companions to die.

*Bin Laden will commit suicide?*
I think he should. They are a group who gather to fight and die. They have to be consistent.

*If Bin Laden dies will Al Qaeda survive?*
Of course. They were a group, but now they are a phenomenon. September 11 made Muslims understand that they have power. A new chapter of history has begun. That's why we have initiated a new calendar. We are now in Year Three of the Al Qaeda era.

Many youths dream of joining Al Qaeda, and there are many freelance groups ready to launch operations similar to Al Qaeda's. The Madrid attack was committed by one of those groups.

*Are there many of those freelance groups in Europe?*
More and more. Which is very dangerous. Here in London there's a very well-organized group. They call themselves Al Qaeda Europe. They spread a lot of propaganda through the Internet and email, and they

appeal to young Muslims. I fear they are preparing a big operation.

*When do we know an attack is really from Al Qaeda?*
It's easy. First, they are always large-scale operations. The operative has to make sure he kills the most people possible. Second, Al Qaeda always leaves its fingerprint: a clue, like a car with the Koran inside, or a tape to be found by the police. Third, the attacks always occur in two or three places at the same time. Finally, the language. I just need to read one sentence in their communiqués to recognize their doctrinal accuracy: there's no sign of nationalism, they never call themselves Arabs or Palestinians, just Muslims. They always speak of martyrdom, of death.

*What does Al Qaeda want?*
Terror. They are engaged in a defensive jihad against those who attacked Islam. In the long run, they want to reestablish the Islamic state, the Caliphate. And to convert the whole world.

*Can the United States negotiate with Al Qaeda?*
Al Qaeda is, by nature, an invisible entity, not a state. Once they knock down the corrupt governments of the Muslim states, replace them with Islamic governments, and rebuild the Caliphate, they could, as a state, negotiate with the United States. First, they will say: we will give you the oil and we will live in peace on the condition that we can spread Islam freely in the West. If the Americans don't allow us to do so, then the Caliphate will have to declare war.

*Aren't Muslims living here more interested in assimilating?*
Muslims first immigrated in the 1940s for economic reasons. They were called "Pakis" and "Coconuts," and mistreated. They didn't care; they were only worried about food and shelter. The second generation assimilated: the children were called "Bobby," and listened to Madonna. We have come to tell them they are members of a great nation, and that this is not their culture. There are 50 million Muslims in the West. The next step is to convert the Westerners. We started by giving self-esteem back to Muslims living here.

*Don't you fear that the terrorist attacks make Westerners hate Islam?*
The number of conversions increased a lot after September 11.

*If you had freedom to spread Islam, would it be easy to convert Westerners?*
No doubt about it. Because the West has no answers about the meaning of life and death, which is life's biggest challenge. Western culture is nothing more than entertainment. Before September 11, I used to go to every campus in this country, giving lectures. Every time, I had many conversions to Islam. Of British people, blond, blue-eyed.

*Before September 11 they allowed you to do that freely?*
I never broke the law. In 1990, I issued a fatwa against the prime minister. I said, number one, that every Muslim had the obligation to kill him. Police arrested me the same day. But, number two, I said, the fatwa was for every Muslim except those living legally in the U.K., which meant no Muslim under my jurisdiction. They released me.

[Reckoning]

## I DID IT MY WAY

*From notes written for police by Gary Ridgway, the "Green River killer," last fall. Ridgway is currently serving forty-eight consecutive life sentences, having pleaded guilty last year to strangling forty-eight women since 1982. He agreed to cooperate fully in return for being spared the death sentence.*

I am a killer of street ladies, not a raper.

I never stabbed any person with a screwdriver or putty knife.

I never killed or hit anybody with a bat, club, or big stick (two-by-four).

I never killed or hurt any body with an axe or hammer.

I never ran anybody over with car, truck, bike to kill or hurt them.

I never shot anybody to kill or wound them.

I never tinted my windows so people couldn't see in.

I never killed any lady that wasn't having some sort of sex for money or rides (no joggers, shop people, neighbors, school kids).

I didn't smoke cigs pipes cigars or chewed tobacco.

No hitting, slapping to any person.

Every lady I did not kill got paid what we both agreed on.

I never used duct tape on any person.

I never used a box cutter on anybody. I bought my ladies, I didn't need force.

I never drugged or got any person drunk to take advantage of them. Did not need to, my way worked out faster. Less trouble.



*"Siena," a photograph by Olivo Barbieri, was on display last spring at Robert Mann Gallery, in New York City*

[Journal]

# DEAR DIARY

*From the English version of the web log of Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a Shia Muslim cleric who is one of Iran's six vice presidents. Abtahi started the blog last December, and his site, www.webnevesht.com, receives around 15,000 hits per day.*

In Arab society it is so well known that Muammar Qaddafi, the leader of Libya, never looks at the faces of his visitors in any of his meetings and he just looks at the roof of the tent in which he holds his meetings. They consider this act of him as his vanity that makes him think that he is much higher than his visitors. After the last two years' events, especially after Sep 11, Qaddafi started to look at his visitors in his meetings, and this was interpreted and considered as an important political event. I pointed that when after all these years Qaddafi has felt that he should keep his head down from now on, it shows that the world has been changed a lot.

Close to my residence, on a wall that I pass by every day, someone had written: "down with the seditious and the author!" I used to look carefully in order to see if there is any suffix beside the word "author" like: paid author or any other adjective that shows this is about a special group of authors. When I got sure that no suffix is there, I got to have a very bad feeling.

I was displeased by those who have used the feelings of the new generation and brought them to this complicated, full of conflicts world in which they bring the positive valuable word of "author" together with the negative word "seditious" and make slogans every day. And every day I hope for the end of this rancorous atmosphere in which they put together the author and the seditious, and I wish that it be replaced by logic. If I were young I would have said that dreaming is not a shame for youths!!!

I have a friend who is much more fatter than me! One of my other friends, making fun of him, says: "when he crosses the Tajrish Square, all the fast food owners wave hands and cheer him!" The worst way to bother this fat friend is to talk about his fatness. He often gives philosophical reasons for his eating!!! He says: "there are two squadrons of life. One is delighted by the width of the life and the other thinks about its duration." His philosophical belief is that: "we should enjoy our life and never must destroy this enjoyment for an unknown future. Why should I trouble and hurt myself in order to live longer while it's not even really ensured?"

This looks good and reasonable for us who are fat! Who says all should be thin in order to be good? It is said that being fat and having a big tummy is known as one of the beauty characteristics in Egypt. I don't know whether it is true or

not, but I hope everywhere in the world become like Egypt in this matter so that no one passes his life with troubles and fears of getting fat!!!

A few days ago, I read in newspapers that my complaint of Keyhan will be prosecuted. I didn't even have it in my mind that I have complained months ago. The story of my complaint is that they published a theme that claimed that I have used to walk with hot pants at the Lebanon's beaches and also I have destroyed the tent of Hezbollah for the profit of Israel. Although it wasn't coming agreeable with my beliefs that I walk with hot pants where many people knew me, and it was definitely a plain lie, but I complained in order to record it somewhere.

Lately, I read the diary book of Ernesto Che Guevara without any reason. I say without any reason because I know very well that the communists' period is ended and spending time on the diaries of one of the olden communists' champions, whose peak of action has been in sixties, doesn't teach anything new.

I personally consider the communist as one of the biggest plagues of the human problems, but when I was reading Che Guevara biography that after his victory in Cuba and tasting the sweetness of authority (something that if one taste it, it becomes his habitude and would never leave it as long as he can) he was again back to that difficult partisan combats and has been bothered a lot and died in this way, so the respect of humans becomes attracted to it somehow.

There is a couple here in Iran that is so valuable! The wife is the representative of Reuters and her husband is the representative of France Press! They have a very wonderful tight race. When there is an important international event, one of them calls. Right after about ten minutes, the other calls!! They both try hard that their rival (which is the spouse) could not understand and get what the other party is doing! This is one of the interesting points of their life.

By the way, it is none of my business to interfere in personal family relations!

I was talking to Mr. Mehralizade (a vice president and the president of sports organization). He was interestingly telling me about the youth interested in sports and complaining about the misuse of some people of the entity of peace, love, intimacy, and kindness in sports.

He wasn't aware of my website!! Asked me what do you write, and I answered "everything!" Curiously asked like what? While Safdar Hosseini (the minister of employment and social affairs) was passing by us, I answered, "for example I have wrote about him that his mostly used word is 'finally.'"

Safdar Hosseini laughed and said: "I never knew what the word I mostly use is. Once that

[Effects]

## ACME SOUNDS

*From the track listing of Cartoon Express, a collection of audio clips available from Sound Ideas, a company based in Richmond Hill, Ontario.*

Character In and Stop on a Dime
Big Twang and Ding
Zoom By and Squish Character
Big Sloppy Squish
Twangy Sproing
Boingy Rubbery Snap
Short, Confused Head Shake
Short Juicy Squirt
Saw Through Tree Branch, Fall and Crash
Big Pant Tear
Squealing and Snorting While Eating
Big Airy Spit
Big Chomps and Sloppy Chewing
Funny Hiccup
Heavy Burp
Small Crowd: Applause and Cheer
Big Echoey Gong Hit
Hard Face Slap
Short Squeaky Kiss
Sharp, Squeaky Vocal Sucking
Sloppy Slime Gushes
Large, Reverberant Malfunction
Small Squeezed Fart
Small Fart in Bathtub at Water Surface
Medium Underwater Fart in Bathtub
Large Fart from Large Male
Female: Short Groan
Squeaky Hee-Haws
Male: Short, Stupid Grunt
Female: High, Giggly Laugh with Snorts
Male: Very Low, Evil, Reverberant Laugh
Sliding Boing and Ding
Burning Fuse Hiss and Crackle
Ripping Explosion
Throwing Pebble, House Collapses
Tumbling Junk and Debris Crash
Small Flower Pot Break
Hard Head Bong and Birds Twitter
Single Person Clapping

I had a speech day [illegible] written [illegible] in the recorded tape. I saw that in each three or four lines there is at least one 'actually.' Then I got embarrassed and therefore tried to omit it from my talks since then." I told him: "*Actually* you have tried to use the word *actually* less but believe me, you still use to say *actually*!!!"

He said "really??" And I said "yeah, really and *actually*!!!"

As long as SMS [short message service] has become common in Iran, instead of being used for its real purposes, it has become an instrument to transfer funny and not funny jokes as everywhere in the world or maybe a little more than other countries due to the Iranians' sense of humor!

It has happened sometimes that I hardly read a SMS in a formal meeting thinking that it might be an important news or matter, but when I read it I unconsciously laugh at the funny parts! It's too bad! On one hand, I cannot explain why am I laughing, and on the other hand, such an unreasonable laugh bothers others.

Reading the PINGLISH SMSs (Pinglish is used when Persian words are written by English alphabets) is much more difficult and people laugh with delay! But anyway it is a kind of fun!

The last changes in the government were being considered in the Parliament. When the president wanted to mention Mr. Khaleghi's (the new minister of labor and social affairs) experiences, he mentioned that when Mr. Khaleghi was young, he was handsome!! Everybody started talking. It seemed that talking about beauty is something illegal.

When president Khatami noticed that everybody are talking, he could realize what was going on and thought the parliament will be unable to find its order this way. Therefore he said: "the God is beautiful and he likes beauty."

The cutest moment was when one of the famous handsome members of the parliament went to kiss Mr. Khatami and told him: "you cannot find anyone more handsome than me here!!" Mr. Khatami glanced at me with a cute smile.

Oh! We shouldn't always talk about politics in these meetings. The science of aesthetics has not been created unreasonably!!

I believe that America, close to the presidential elections, needs Iraq situation to be convulsed more than ever. Bush needs to announce the public in America that there is an unfinished project in Iraq that no one else other than him can make it to the last point and if doesn't finish, the Middle East will be in war and fire and America will be injured and damaged more than any other country.

I hope that those who are influential in political areas of Iraq, including Shiite and Sunni parties, pay attention to this reality and do not prepare grounds for the longer stability of occupational regime and let Iraqis to be able to decide on their destiny as soon as possible.

[Analysis]

# THE BOYS IN THE BUBBLE

*From a memo sent in March by a Pentagon adviser posted in Iraq. The names of the memo's author and recipient were redacted, along with those of other officials, but the author is widely believed to be Michael Rubin, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. Rubin recently returned from a nine-month tour as a political officer at the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the United States' occupational government in Iraq led by Paul Bremer. The Iraqi Governing Council was appointed by the CPA in July 2003. The memo was obtained by Jason Vest, a journalist for the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies.*

Despite the progress evident in the streets of Baghdad, much of which happens despite us rather than because of us, Baghdadis have an uneasy sense that they are heading toward civil war. Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish professionals say that they are buying weapons, fearing for the future. Ironically, the CPA is driving the weapons market: Iraqi police sell their U.S.-supplied weapons on the black market, and they are promptly re-supplied. Interior-ministry weapons buybacks keep the price of arms high.

Streetlights function irregularly and traffic lights not at all. Electricity in Baghdad is on and off in three- or four-hour rotations. There is no consistency. Despite assurances to the contrary, neither the CPA nor the Ministry of Electricity publishes a schedule of power cuts and rotations.

Throughout Iraq, we are handicapped by our security bubble. Few at the CPA get out of the Green Zone anymore. Most drivers work during the day, but not in the evening hours when Baghdad is most alive. (As an aside, most Iraqi politicking occurs between 9 P.M. and 3 A.M., so the CPA is missing a great deal.) The U.S. government has spent millions importing sport-utility vehicles, which are used exclusively to drive the kilometer and a half between the Convention Center and the Palace. We would have been much better off with a small

# IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three

uno, dos, tres

un, deux, trois

一、二、三

eins, zwei, drei

אחת, שתיים, שלוש

jeden, dwa, trzy

एक, दो, तीन

moja, mbili, tatu

일, 이, 삼

een, twee, drie

один, два, три

uno, due, tre

unus, duo, tres

یو، دوه، درې

in any of these languages

English • Spanish • French • Chinese
German • Hebrew • Polish • Hindi • Swahili
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Pashto • Arabic • Japanese • Portuguese
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fleet of used cars and a bicycle for every Green Zone resident.

The CPA's isolation will get worse with the transfer to the State Department. In the view of most Regional Security Officers, the best assurance of safety is to not leave the Green Zone. The irony is that the Green Zone is hardly secure; large concentrations of Americans and Brits make tempting artillery targets. The isolation is two-sided: Iraqis realize that the entrances to the Green Zone are under surveillance by bad guys. No one prevents people from entering the parking lot outside the checkpoint to note the license-plate numbers of "collaborators." The net effect is that a segment of Iraqi society avoids meeting Americans because they fear the Green Zone.

Even those Iraqis willing to talk to Americans think twice, since American officials create a spectacle of themselves, with convoys, flak jackets, and fancy SUVs. Few in Hilla, Nasiriya, or Basra are willing to complain to Americans because they feel that Americans' inability to be inconspicuous may bring them personal harm.

To balance out the need for security with the need to get an accurate on-the-ground report, we need to send out people who approach the streets with a fresh outlook. Allowing political officers to roam would not compromise security, nor would it create any more administrative chaos than already exists. One CPA official drew an apt metaphor: Watching the CPA handle an issue is like watching six-year-olds play soccer. Someone kicks the ball, and one hundred people chase after it without a care as to what else happens on the field.

Bremer hesitates to make tough but necessary decisions, instead hoping to foist them onto his successor or international organizations. We need to use our prerogative as occupying power to signal that corruption will not be tolerated. To take action against men like [name redacted] would win us applause on the street. The alleged kickbacks that [name redacted] is accepting should be especially serious for us, since he was one of two ministers who met the President and had his picture taken with him.

We share culpability in the eyes of ordinary Iraqis. After all, we appointed the Governing Council members. Their corruption is our corruption. Iraqis were assured that their exclusion from the Governing Council did not mean an exclusion from the process. As it turned out, we lied. People from Kut, for example, see that they have no representation on the Governing Council, and many Iraqis predict civil war since they doubt that the Governing Council will really allow elections.

In allowing the Governing Council to handpick twenty-five ministers, not only did we endorse nepotism, with men choosing their sons or brothers-in-law; we also failed to use our prerogative to shape a system that would work. It is true that several Governing Council members have real constituencies, but these constituencies are based not on ideology but on the muscle of their respective personal militias and the patronage which we allow them to bestow. We have bestowed approximately $600 million upon the Kurdish leadership, in addition to the salaries we pay, the USAID projects, and the taxes we have allowed them to collect illegally.

[Morality Play]

## COMPANY MANN

*From* The Battle for Avery Mann (An Ethics Conflict), *a film made for the United States Office of Government Ethics by CACI Productions, a division of CACI International, a conglomerate that also employs "interrogation specialists," including two of those accused in General Antonio Taguba's February report of bearing primary responsibility for the crimes at Abu Ghraib prison.*

Not long ago, in the city of Washington, there lived a man named Avery Mann. Avery was a mid-level Government employee. He was not a bad man. He worked hard at his job and he loved his wife and children. But Avery had a blind spot when it came to ethics—Government ethics—and that blind spot nearly brought him to ruin.

Chapter 1: In Which Avery Uses Something That Doesn't Belong to Him
Chapter 2: In Which Avery Learns to Beware of Gifts
Chapter 3: In Which Avery Proves Himself a Slow Learner
Chapter 4: In Which Avery Finds Himself in a Conflict
The Conclusion: In Which Avery Gets the Message

Avery retired some years later with an unblemished record of service.

The End.

Our failure to promote accountability has hurt us. The interim constitution is just an exercise in CPA masturbation if it is not enforced. The fact that we do nothing about Muqtada al-Sadr's al-Mahdi, which is running around Najaf arresting and torturing people and trying Iraqis before kangaroo courts, signals to Iraqis that we lack seriousness. It also telegraphs that they cannot win legitimacy through the ballot box, and therefore they will seek to grab it through violence.

Lastly, before I sign off, our diplomats fear using leverage. It is much nicer to sleep at the resort [name redacted] appropriated for his own personal use when you don't have to listen to him harp and complain. Likewise, it is better to keep [name redacted] a happy drunk rather than an angry drunk. If our diplomats and CPA officials feel uncomfortable being bad cop, it is essential that people in Washington play the role.

[Clichés]

# STRANGELY FAMILIAR

*From a list of plots and themes of stories submitted "too frequently" to* Strange Horizons, *an online magazine of "speculative fiction." The document was compiled in order to provide guidance to potential contributors.*

1. Person is (metaphorically) at point A, wants to be at point B. Looks at point B, says, "I want to be at point B." Goes to point B, encountering no meaningful obstacles or difficulties. The end.

2. Creative person is having trouble creating.
   a. Writer has writer's block.
   b. Painter can't seem to paint anything good.
   c. Sculptor can't seem to sculpt anything good.

3. Visitor to alien planet ignores information about local rules, inadvertently violates them, is punished.

4. Weird things happen, but it turns out they're not real.
   a. It turns out it was all in virtual reality.
   b. It turns out the protagonist is insane.
   c. It turns out the protagonist is writing a novel and the events we've seen are part of the novel.

5. The future is soulless.
   a. In the future, all learning is electronic, until kid is exposed to ancient wisdom in the form of a book.
   b. In the future, everything is electronic, until kid is exposed to ancient wisdom in the form of a wise old person who's lived a non-electronic life.

6. Protagonist is a bad person. (We don't object to this in a story; we merely object to it being the main point of the plot.)
   a. Bad person is told he'll get the reward that he deserves, which ends up being something bad.
   b. Terrorists (especially Osama bin Laden) discover that horrible things happen to them in the afterlife (or otherwise get their comeuppance).
   c. Protagonist is portrayed as really awful, but that portrayal is merely a setup for the ending, in which he sees the error of his ways and is redeemed.

7. A place is described, with no plot or characters.

8. A surprise twist ending occurs.
   a. The characters are described as if they are humans, but in the end it turns out they're not humans.
   b. Creatures are described as "vermin" or "pests" or "monsters," but in the end it turns out they're humans.
   c. Person is floating in a formless void; in the end, he's born.

9. Someone calls technical support; wacky high jinks ensue.
   a. Someone calls technical support for a magical item.
   b. Someone calls technical support for a piece of advanced technology.
   c. The title of the story is 1-800-SOMETHING-CUTE.

10. Scientist uses himself or herself as test subject.

11. Evil unethical doctor performs medical experiments on unsuspecting patient.

12. Office life turns out to be soul-deadening, literally or metaphorically.

13. Protagonist is given wise and mystical advice by Holy Simple Native Folk.

14. In the future, criminals are punished much more harshly than they are today.
   a. In the future, the punishment always fits the crime.
   b. In the future, the American constitutional amendment prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment has been repealed, or is interpreted very narrowly.



"Long's Parking Lot, New Jersey," by Patrick O'Hara. His work can be viewed at Pierogi Gallery, in Brooklyn.

[Vignettes]

# THREE PIECES FOR THE LEFT HAND

*By J. Robert Lennon, from the Spring issue of* Gram. *Lennon is the author, most recently, of the novel* Mailman.

A local poet of considerable national fame completed a new collection of poems that had, due to a painful and scandalous series of personal problems, been delayed in editing and publication for some years. When the revisions were finally finished, the poet typed up a clean copy of the manuscript and got into his car to bring it to the copy shop for reproduction.

On the way, however, the poet was pulled over for running a red light and was subsequently found to be drunk. Due to a new and unforgiving drunk-driving law in our state, his car was impounded and his license revoked.

Upon regaining sobriety, the poet realized that his manuscript was still in the car and asked the police to return it to him. The police, however, maintained that the contents of the car no longer belonged to him, and refused. Their refusal resulted in a protracted legal battle, during which our beloved poet died, leaving uncertain the fate of the manuscript.

But the poet's publisher, eager to issue a posthumous volume, struck a bargain with the police department: if someone at the station would read the finished poems over the phone, an editor could transcribe them and issue them in book form without the manuscript changing hands. After all, the publisher argued, even if the manuscript legally belonged to the city, its contents did not, as they were devised outside the poet's car. The police agreed to this scheme, the phone recitation took place, and the book was issued to great acclaim, assuring the poet a place in the literary canon that he had not enjoyed in life.

Eventually, however, the poet's estate won its legal battle against the city, and the original manuscript was recovered. All were shocked to

learn that it bore little resemblance to the published book.

It was not long before a city policeman confessed to having improvised much of the manuscript during its telephone transcription. His only explanation was that he saw room for improvement and could not resist making a few changes here and there. The policeman was subsequently asked to leave the force, and the acclaimed book was completely discredited. The true manuscript was published in its entirety, to tepid reviews.

The policeman has continued to write poetry. Most agree that it is excellent, but few will publish the work of someone known to be so dishonest.

* * *

A farmer who lives on our road had lost three mailboxes in as many weeks to the drunken antics of some local youths, who had taken to driving past late at night and smashing the mailboxes with a baseball bat. Because the police had been uncooperative in apprehending the youths, the farmer devised a solution to the problem: he bought two mailboxes—a gigantic, industrial-strength one, and a small aluminum one—and arranged the boxes one inside the other, with a layer of cement between the two. He mounted this monstrous mega-box on a length of eight-inch steel pipe, which was set into a four-foot hole and stabilized there with thirty additional gallons of cement.

The following weekend the youths sped past in their convertible, and T., the captain of the high school baseball team and a local slugger of some renown, swung at the box from a standing position in the back seat. With the bat moving at more than seventy-five miles per hour relative to the car, and the car itself traveling nearly as fast, the combined velocity of the impact was approximately 150 miles per hour. It was at this speed that the bat ricocheted and struck the head of J., a seventeen-year-old girl sitting in the car, killing her instantly.

A series of criminal charges and civil suits followed. T. was tried as an adult and convicted of involuntary manslaughter. The driver of the car was sentenced to community service on charges of vandalism and reckless endangerment. The farmer was also convicted of reckless endangerment and fined; in response he sued the police department for failing to address the problem beforehand. The parents of the dead girl lobbied to have all the car's living occupants, five in all, expelled from school; they also sued T., the driver, and the farmer for several million dollars. They even tried, and failed, to sue the hardware store where the farmer had bought his cement-mailbox supplies, arguing that the store's employees ought to have figured out what the farmer was doing and stopped him. In a peripheral case, T.'s parents sued the hospital where he was treated for a broken arm; apparently the doctors there had set the break improperly, resulting in a painful re-setting that was likely to ruin T.'s chances to play baseball in the major leagues. Their lawyers demanded a percentage of T.'s projected future salary.

In the end, all charges were reversed on appeal. It seemed that everyone involved was to blame, which the courts determined was no different from no one being to blame. All that remains, apart from the many legal debts incurred by the litigants and the accused, is the cement mailbox, which has proven too costly and cumbersome to remove.

* * *

A local novelist spent ten years writing a book about our region and its inhabitants that, when completed, added up to more than 1,000 pages. Exhausted by her effort, she at last sent it off to a publisher, only to be told that it would have to be cut by nearly half. Though daunted by the work ahead of her, the novelist was encouraged by the publisher's interest, and spent more than a year excising material.

But by the time she reached the requested length, the novelist found it difficult to stop. In the early days of her editing, she would struggle for hours to remove words from a sentence, only to discover that the paragraph was better off without it. Soon she discovered that removing sentences from a paragraph was rarely as effective as cutting entire paragraphs, nor was selectively erasing paragraphs from a chapter as satisfying as eliminating chapters entirely. After another year, she had whittled the book down into a short story, which she sent to magazines.

Multiple rejections, however, drove her back to the chopping block, where she reduced her story to a vignette, the vignette to an anecdote, the anecdote to an aphorism, and the aphorism, at last, to this haiku:

Tiny Upstate town
Undergoes many changes
Nonetheless endures

Unfortunately, no magazine would publish the haiku. The novelist has printed it on note cards, which she gives away to passersby in our town park, where she is also known sometimes to sleep, except when the police, whose thuggish tactics she so neatly parodied in her original manuscript, bring her in on charges of vagrancy. I have a copy of the haiku pinned above my desk, the note card grimy and furred along the edges from multiple profferings, and I read it frequently, sometimes with pity but always with awe.



Hochbahn, *by David Schnell. His work was on display in April at LIGA, in Berlin.*

# WE ARE NOT IMMUNE

## Influenza, SARS, and the collapse of public health

*By Ronald J. Glasser, M.D.*

Death is inevitable, but not disease. The difference may be as simple as washing our hands or keeping the wastes of industrialized farming out of the water supply, but it is often much more complicated. Bacteria and viruses are no mean adversaries, nor are they easily defeated. If we fail to be watchful or to protect those most at risk, a public-health catastrophe is inevitable, and yet somewhere within the span of the last thirty years the idea of the common good has disappeared from our national consciousness, giving way to the misconception that we no longer need concern ourselves with the welfare of our fellow citizens. It is a dangerous conceit, and it leads us toward a future infected with unprecedented and unnecessary disease.

We have grown not so much complacent as narcotized, lulled into a sense of security by the almost daily pronouncements from corporate medicine and the pharmaceutical industry of ever better drugs and more "breakthrough" treatments. The spectacular progress of twentieth-century medicine, most recently the sequencing of the human genome, sponsors the widespread fancy that disease might someday be conquered, that genetic manipulation or nanotechnology or some other science-fiction marvel might bring with it a cure for death. Long forgotten are the days when the loss of a child to diphtheria or whooping cough or yellow fever was a commonplace event, the days before widespread vaccination and government safety and health regulations; we no longer remember life before publicly funded sewage-treatment plants and the passage of the clean-air and -water acts. Public health is often invisible and unremarked when it works well; when it fails, our neighbors sicken and die.

A public-health system is only as strong as its weakest link; an epidemic enforces, in the most rigorous fashion, the American credo that all men are created equal. If we allow one segment of our society to suffer and

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During a two-week period in 1993 one of Milwaukee's two water-treatment plants malfunctioned. This waterworks supplied treated drinking water directly from Lake Michigan to at least half the population of Milwaukee and nine of its suburbs. The investigation that eventually followed revealed unprecedented increases in the density levels of the supposedly treated water during that two-week period. The gauges designed for continuous measurement of water purity had clearly not been functioning properly for pe-

*More than 30% of hospital beds and 25 hospitals have been eliminated in Minnesota since the government reports the state has 16,911 licensed beds, of which only about 13,000 are staffed and most of these are occupied every day. Nationally, between 1980 and 1995 1,200 hospitals shut their doors.*

*The failure of antibiotics to control common infections such as staph and strep is one of* [illegible] *crises, a crisis characterized by the sudden overprescription of* [illegible] *by the widespread application of antibiotics to livestock that would otherwise perish in the filthy environments of industrial agriculture.*

s as long as eight to twelve hours at a time. The precise reason for the re remains obscure, but what is clear is that no alarms went off, no back-ystems were brought online, and no one noticed the increases in tur-ty that led to the largest waterborne epidemic ever to occur in the ted States.

Within days of the plant's malfunction and continuing for an additional nth, more than 403,000 people in the Milwaukee area developed fever, iiting, and diarrhea. One hundred people died. The cause of the illness *Cryptosporidium*, a single-celled microorganism that survives in bodies tanding water and has been known as a cause of diarrhea, abdominal nping, nausea, vomiting, and fever since the 1970s. There is no medical tment for the infection, and in otherwise healthy individuals the disease sually self-limiting, though in a minority of cases the disease can lead to ks of disability. In patients on immunosuppressive medications, those un-going chemotherapy, or those with AIDS, the infection can be ruthless, elenting, and fatal.

The seriousness of *Cryptosporidium* in an immune-suppressed patient ame clear at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic when physicians found this strange and unexpected parasite in the blood and bone rrows of infected patients. Knowing that the organism was basically a ease of herd animals, the doctors contacted the eminent expert on *Cryptosporidium* in the depart-nt of agriculture at the University of Iowa. When professor was asked how infected sheep were treat-he hesitated. "There is no treatment," he an-ered. "We shoot them."

There are well over 1,400 documented microor-isms that can infect humans, of which fully one f first caused disease in animals. *Cryptosporidium* de the transfer to humans through the contami-ion of surface waters by runoff from farmlands d drainage ditches. Unfortunately, the cysts that ead the infection are highly resistant to chlorine d even remain viable in the laboratory after expo-es to full-strength household bleaches. You can't l the *Cryptosporidium* cysts, and while alive they re-in astonishingly infectious. Disease has been own to occur through ingestion of as few as thir-cysts, and experimental data have shown that even ingle cyst can pass on the disease to uninfected eep as well as to humans. The only means of pre-ntion for a contaminated water supply are filters of s than one micron placed within water-purification tems that physically remove the millions of heavy, nse cysts before they reach the household taps of blic water supplies.

The failure of the main safety and backup gauges in ilwaukee was clearly a disaster, but the most unnerving aspect of the Wis-nsin epidemic was not the astronomical numbers of affected people or en the deaths; it was the fact that, in the midst of the worsening epidem-it was not the federal government or any state or local health department surveillance program or emergency-room database or managed-health-re reporting system that alerted the public that an epidemic was in progress. was a pharmacist, who happened to notice unusual sales of over-the-unter diarrhea medication. The local media reported the outbreak days be-re the health department took action, almost a week after the alarm was st raised.

The outbreak of *Cryptosporidium* in Milwaukee was more than the mple malfunction of a few gauges in a midsized American city; to those ncerned about the nation's ability to treat its people and control

*CRYPTOSPORIDIUM* MADE THE TRANSFER TO HUMANS THROUGH CONTAMINATED SURFACE RUNOFF FROM FARMLANDS



## PREVENTION AND SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMS ARE NOT WORKING

disease, it was a clear sign that our infectious-disease and medical s
veillance and prevention programs were no longer working. Although t
Milwaukee disaster was unusual for its size, waterborne outbreaks of d
ease are not uncommon. The Centers for Disease Control maintai
database on the subject, but the statistics are not very reliable because t
depend on the voluntary reporting of state and local health officia
Some states choose not to make these reports; some states do not even ha
active disease-surveillance systems. But local failures can often have
broader consequences, as we learned from the 1999 outbreak of the We
Nile virus in New York City. Mosquito surveillance and control was a l
cal budget casualty that led to a national epidemic, and by last year We
Nile had appeared in every state but Washington, Oregon, Alaska, a
Hawaii; 14,163 people are known to have been infected and 564 have di
The discovery in 2002 that the virus was transmitted via organ tra
plantation, and possibly by blood transfusion, has led to fears that the n
tional blood supply could be contaminated. Testing for West Nile rais
the cost of blood by $4 to $7 a unit. And even as the virus spreads acr
the continent, federal funding is being cut; in 2004 the Mosquito Abat
ment for Safety and Health Act received zero fun
ing, and none has been requested for 2005.



The United States has no single agency responsib
for public health and thus no coherent policy. As La
rie Garrett suggests in her monumental study, *Betra*
*al of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health*, it is
exaggeration to say that we simply lack a public-heal
system per se; what we do have is best described as
hodgepodge of programs, bureaucracies, and failings

The great public-health victories of the nin
teenth and early twentieth centuries over yello
fever, cholera, encephalitis, smallpox, puerper
fever, and a host of other infectious diseases we
largely the result of preventive measures enacted b
visionary public officials: improved sanitation an
nutrition (safe water and food, decent housin
paved streets, sewers), vigorous powers of quarantin
to prevent contagion, mosquito control and the in
stallation of window glass, and the creation of vacc
nation programs. Few advances were as important
the realization that merely washing one's hand
could prevent the spread of disease. Life expectanc
in the eighteenth century for an average male w
about thirty years; by the early 1970s, it was seventy
five years. And as Garrett points out, most of tha
progress occurred prior to the invention of ant
biotics, and "less than 4 percent of the total im
provement in life expectancy since the 1700s can be credited to twentiet
century advances in medical care." Ironically, the medical revolutions
the twentieth century have contributed to our overconfident and compl
cent neglect of the public-health infrastructure. We spend vast sums t
lengthen the lives of terminally ill patients by a few da
and refuse to make modest investments that would prever
millions of needless illnesses and deaths.

The peculiar dynamics of American politics, with its periodi
spasms of irrational antigovernment hysteria, have ensured that few e
fective public-health policies fail to attract powerful political enemie
enemies that more often than not have succeeded in weakening th
agencies charged by Congress with the responsibility for the health an
well-being of the American people. Not even the CDC is immune fro
the virus of partisan politics; despite an overwhelming medical consensu

agency has refused to take a position on the use of condoms to pre-
t AIDS and has curtailed the printing or distribution of any data on
control or treatment of sexually transmitted diseases that might of-
d the most conservative Christians. In response to political pressure
n the NRA and threats from Congress to withhold funding, the CDC
also discontinued its definitive research documenting the public-
lth costs of handguns.

The Food and Drug Administration presents the same self-defeating
tern of regulatory behavior. In May of this year, the agency refused to
rove a morning-after contraceptive pill for over-the-counter use,
n after its own expert advisory panel recommended it. Far worse is
degree to which the FDA panders to its industrial constituency.
ugs receive approval without adequate testing; the agency dithers
en patients begin to die; eventually it turns out that adverse findings
re ignored or suppressed. Often more concerned for the well-being of
pharmaceutical industry than for the health of American citizens,
FDA challenges states that seek to purchase cheaper Canadian drugs
their citizens and ignores the ongoing concentration of drug and
cine production into the hands of fewer and larger companies, which
led to greater consumer costs and vaccine shortages. The agency has
wn no inclination to pressure manufacturers into adopting new tech-
logies that would allow the timely and safe development of new vac-
es in response to emerging diseases. Not too long ago the FDA sup-
rted the pharmaceutical industry's wish to give antidepressant drugs
children despite the agency's own finding that such drugs might cause
em to commit suicide.

Faced with alarming outbreaks of food-borne illness, the Department
Agriculture has refused to enforce the use of any of the more defini-
e and reliable, though admittedly more costly, bacterial tests of meat
d meat products to replace the pathetically ineffective "poke and
iff" test used in all government-monitored and -approved slaughter-
uses and meat-processing plants. *E. coli*, salmonella, listeria, shigella,
ve all caused outbreaks of disease. What is astonishing is not that a
illion pounds of hamburger can be contaminated from one infected
w but that the federal government demands only "voluntary" recalls.
nfronted with proof that mad cow disease has infected the American
od supply, the agency has prohibited the routine testing of American
ttle for the disease, using the newly available tests only in obviously
seased animals and then allowing the animals to be slaughtered and
it into the food supply before the results of those tests are available.
he USDA has dismissed the recommendations of some of the nation's
ost prominent professors of agriculture and veterinary medicine to in-
itute a more rigorous and scientific method of testing for this disease,
ually citing as an excuse the meat industry's concern that any testing
will add an additional three to five cents a pound to consumer prices. The USDA is not so much a regulatory agency as it is an arm of the meat-industry lobby.

Americans, we know, pay too much for their health care, and
mpared with other countries we receive a very poor return on our in-
estment. The reasons are many, but they are not hard to understand:
n essence, we have tended historically to view health care as a com-
odity like any other. But health is not a product; it is a public good.
he evidence is clear that even when viewed through the reductive
ns of purely economic self-interest, market-based, entrepreneurial
edicine is a failure. Healing people after they fall ill is vastly more ex-
ensive than preventing the illness in the first place: every dollar spent
reventing diphtheria, for instance, saves $27; every dollar spent on
easles, mumps, and rubella saves $23. Yet policymakers have consis-
ently preferred the most expensive and least efficient models of health

WE HAVE TENDED HISTORICALLY TO VIEW HEALTH CARE AS A COMMODITY. BUT HEALTH IS NOT A PRODUCT; IT IS A PUBLIC GOOD

ALTHOUGH FEDERAL FUNDING HAS INCREASED SINCE 2001, STATE PUBLIC-HEALTH BUDGETS HAVE CONTINUED TO DECLINE

care, proving once again that the apostles of privatization are motiv ed not by hard-nosed economics but by an incoherent ideology that little more than a brittle mask concealing the most irrational species self-interest.

For the last quarter century, especially after the election of Ron Reagan and his declaration that government itself is the problem that flicts us, the public-health infrastructure of this country has been evisc ated. Between 1981 and 1993, public-health expenditures declined by percent as a proportion of overall health spending; in 1992, less than percent of all American health-care spending was devoted to pub health. That trend has continued, even after the anthrax attacks of 20 when politicians suddenly realized how vulnerable the nation was to b logical attack.

Since then, it is true, the federal government has appropriated abo $2 billion for bioterrorism response, an undertaking that if it were act ally carried out would necessarily involve improving the public-heal infrastructure. In theory, the bioterrorism money is channeled throu the CDC, which distributes it to the states, which in turn disper money to local health departments. Superficially, the gains are impre sive: the CDC's budget for "public health preparedness and response f bioterrorism" increased from $49.9 million in 2001 to $918 million 2002 and $870 million in 2003. Yet strangely enough, state and loc public-health budgets have continued to decline. Public-health labor tories in California could lose 20 percent of their funding this year; t Alabama Department of Public Health expects to fire 250 people an to close regional labs and cut back on its flu-vaccination program State funding for AIDS prevention in Massachusetts has been cut by percent over the last two years. Larimer County, Colorado, where la summer 500 people contracted the West Nile virus, received $100,0 in federal funds but lost $700,000 in state money. Overall, thirty-tw states cut their public-health budgets between fiscal years 2002 an 2003. Michigan cut its spending by 24 percent, Massachusetts by percent, and Montana, which received more federal bioterror mon per capita than New York, cut its public-health budget by 19 percen Many states, facing huge budget deficits, apparently took the feder money and simply cut their own appropriations. This should come no surprise: in 2003 the states collectively faced a $66 billion shortfa and in 2004 state deficits are estimated to be $78 billion. Federal i vestment will do no good if state politicians, struggling to cope wi the economic effects of other federal policies, use those funds to redu their own deficits.

The Trust for America's Health (TFAH), a nonprofit group th monitors public-health policy, in December released a comprehensiv study of what the state health departments have accomplished wi their "increased" funding. TFAH found that only twenty-four stat had spent at least 90 percent of their 2002 bioterror funds, and on seventeen states had passed at least 50 percent of the money along local health departments. Much of the money is mired in bureaucrac A February GAO report revealed that the states were not much bett prepared for bioterrorism (and by extension, a natural epidemic) tha they were in 2001.

Of course, state health departments can hardly be blamed for their in ability to correct a quarter century of neglect with what amounts to mere $2,000 for every staffed hospital bed in America. Bioterroris funds are being used simply to keep the lights on, and no one who h carefully observed the Bush Administration would expect it to follo through with its promises to rebuild the public-health system. In fac the President's 2005 budget proposal calls for a $105 million decrease i state and local bioterrorism funding. The new budget also cuts $1. billion from the "Function 550" account, which finances disease

vention programs and other public-health initiatives, and the federal blic Health Improvements Programs were cut by 64 percent.
Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson has med that preparing for bioterrorism will enable the government to re- nd to influenza and other infectious diseases; in fact, the reverse is true. terrorism is a remote threat and a massive attack is very unlikely, but it tures the imagination of weak-minded politicians and a populace raised movies starring Bruce Willis. The truly imminent biological threat, ich all public-health experts agree will inevitably strike, is an influenza idemic. The 1918 pandemic killed 550,000 Americans and 30 million rldwide. A virulent flu would thus be much worse than a bioterrorism ack, and it would strike every part of the country more or less simultane- ly. These facts are well known and understood, yet TFAH found that y thirteen states have a plan or at least a draft of a plan to confront an influenza pandemic. Amazingly, the CDC itself has yet to release a federal plan for such a pandemic; nor does the CDC require states to report flu cases or even flu deaths.

Every year influenza epidemics emerge from areas such as the angdong region of China, where large populations of farmers, pigs, d poultry share their species' various strains of e influenza virus. When multiple strains of the us infect the same host, they begin to share nes, creating new mutations; when a new strain erges for which humans have no immunity, a ndemic can occur.

In response to a 1997 avian influenza outbreak at began to infect humans but stopped short, for ne reason, of becoming an epidemic, the World alth Organization significantly expanded its flu- evention activities and set up its Global Agenda Influenza Surveillance and Control, a program ose four main objectives are to monitor the read of influenza in animals and humans, to iden- y each year's newest infective strain, to accelerate bal pandemic awareness, and to increase usage d speed development of an effective vaccine. ch year the WHO surveillance program puts its fectious-disease teams along with its worldwide twork of more than one hundred laboratories on ert, hoping to detect outbreaks before they spread ound the globe. Such generalized surveillance is fficult and expensive, but the danger of emerging fections and the continuing influenza threat have ft the world health community with little choice.

In February 2003 the WHO issued a report about group of patients with severe influenza in Hong ong. The index case was a physician from Guangdong province in hina. A global alert was soon issued concerning similar illnesses in ngapore and Hanoi. The WHO sent Dr. Carlo Urbani, an Italian fectious-disease specialist, to Hanoi to investigate. Urbani swiftly de- rmined that the disease was something unusual and that it was highly ntagious and virulent. Unlike influenza, which always begins with a nny nose, waves of generalized aches and pains, and weakness, fol- wed by days of fever and an increasing cough before the onset of pneu- onia, this disease progressed almost immediately to severe pneumonia, spiratory collapse, and, for many, death. We now know that these erts were describing the SARS outbreak, which nearly became a global ndemic. Working closely with the Vietnamese authorities, Urbani nd other specialists from the WHO, the CDC, and Doctors Without

THE IMMINENT THREAT, WHICH ALL PUBLIC-HEALTH EXPERTS AGREE WILL INEVITABLY STRIKE, IS AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC



THE LESSON OF THE SARS OUTBREAK WAS THAT PLANNING, SURVEILLANCE, AND DECISIVE ACTION CAN PREVENT EPIDEMICS

Borders were able to contain the disease in Hanoi, though tragically Urbani himself contracted SARS and died in a makeshift isolation ward in Bangkok. It was not long before the disease spread to Toronto. By late March, 6,800 people there had already been quarantined, with another 5,200 health care staff working "in quarantine" at facilities that public-health officials had quickly set aside for treating suspected SARS cases. In the United States public-health officials were simply holding their breath, hoping for the best. Not only have cutbacks stripped rural areas of their hospitals and clinics but even the major cities now lack the number of acute-care and infectious-disease beds—not to mention the nursing staff, technicians, and isolation units—to deal with a bad case of influenza much less a full-fledged disease with what appeared to be the staggering demands of SARS.

What happened next was unprecedented: researchers quickly determined that the disease was caused by a new type of virus and very rapidly isolated the cause as a previously unknown coronavirus that had apparently jumped from an animal species to humans. It was not lost on the world's infectious-disease experts that what had taken physicians and scientists almost four years in the case of AIDS was accomplished for SARS in less than four months. It is no exaggeration to say that the billions of dollars so reluctantly pushed into viral research as a result of the efforts of AIDS activists in the 1980s and 1990s enabled the WHO to quickly find the cause of another viral plague. And it was the ability to share accurate information in real time via email and the Internet that allowed the WHO to hold the disease in check.

In the midst of all the tracking of potential contacts, the increased hospitalizations, the thousands of people in quarantine, the disease simply vanished at virtually the same time all over the world. Coronaviruses thrive in cold weather, and, like influenza, they spread during the winter months, which accounts for the yearly outbreaks of colds and upper-respiratory infections. The realization that SARS is a cold-weather virus is troubling, because it means that there has been no real victory, only a reprieve. It has to be assumed that SARS is still out there waiting for another winter.

The lesson of the SARS outbreak was that preparation, surveillance, and decisive action from public officials can prevent epidemics. The WHO response was exemplary—training, staffing, equipment, and funding were all in place, ready for an emergency—but we still lack a truly global early-warning system. In the United States we continue to be without an effective national warning system. As *Lancet* editor Richard Horton writes in *Health Wars*, his scathing critique of contemporary medicine, "No single agency—CDC, WHO, the military, or a non-governmental organization (such as Médecins Sans Frontières)—currently has the resources, staff, or equipment to act as a rapid-response strike force during a civilian health emergency." If SARS had come to the United States, there is little hope that it could have been contained.

Today, we are no better prepared for a SARS epidemic than we were last year. "Homeland security," curiously interpreted to exclude the most plausible and deadly threats facing our population, has remained the priority. The massive smallpox immunization program in 2002 was little more than a distraction and waste of precious funds. Meanwhile, we are afflicted with a government that has waged war all across the world to avenge the deaths of 3,000 terror victims, far fewer than die of influenza in a mild year; a government that insists on spending $50 billion to build a missile-defense system that does not work, a military-industrial make-work project designed to meet a threat that does not exist. The war in Iraq consumes almost $4 billion a month, twice the amount we have largely squandered on bioterrorism since 2001. We have grown so foolish and so incompetent that perhaps we do not deserve to survive. Perhaps it is simply time to die.

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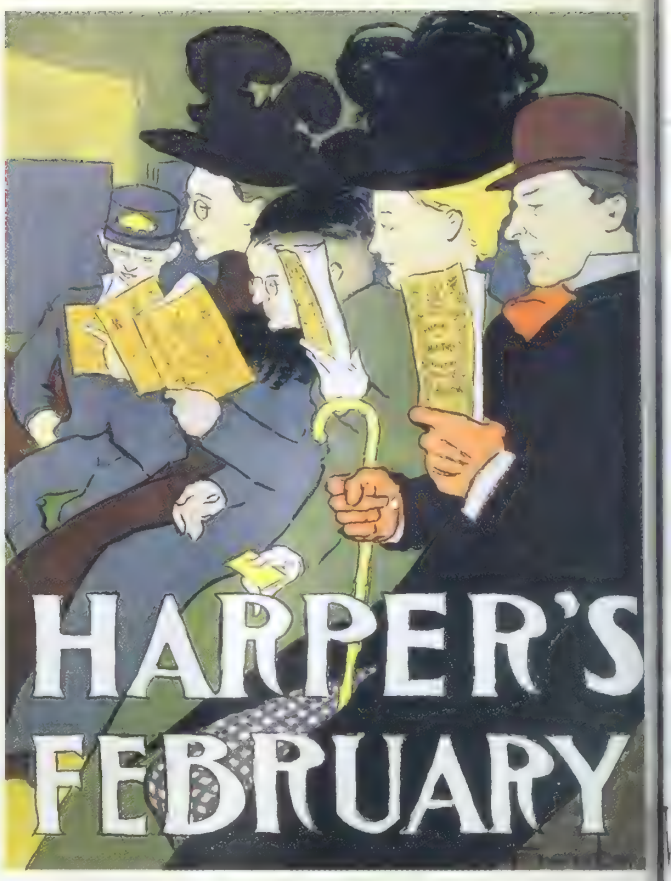
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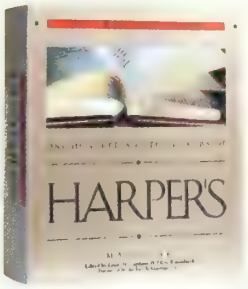
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# SMALL SILENCES

## *Listening for the lessons of nature*

*By Edward Hoagland*

Wandering to the edge of Dr. Green's woods, xt door to our new house, at the age of eight, I und a little brook running—my first, because we id just moved from the city to e country. The floating twigs id leaves, the ripples, and yet e water's mirroring qualities, id the tug on my fingers or feet hen I dipped them in, plus the mperature, so remarkably dif- rent from the air's, fascinated e. We, like the other neighbors, id some brush and untrimmed ees in back of our lawn, so the ook picked up interesting flot- m before entering Dr. Green's nes, where except for scattered oulders or stones the ground was ss varied, all needly. The sounds ie stream made, thocking and cking, bubbling and trickling, ere equally beguiling, however, id, like the wind-nudged boughs visting overhead, never precisely the same.



This was in Connecticut during World War II, o we kept a dozen brown hens for their eggs, nd I watched their pecking order develop, and ther habits, endlessly. But the brook was a near econd for curiosity, and because it was undo- nesticated I recognized in it a wilder power. I felt like part of the flock—feared for them at nightfall, when they would duck inside the coop through an entrance I never forgot to close, and rejoiced with them when a New Hampshire Red rooster was acquired to trumpet their accomplishments. But the woods were an adventure, more mysteriously reverberant. By nine I was probably daring enough to follow the stream (knee-high, so nobody was afraid I might drown in it) through the forest far enough to catch sight of Dr. Green's pond and approach its spongy inlet. I must have heard about its existence, but no one had taken me there—my father golfed, my mother gardened. The distance is now elastic in my mind's eye, but no roads or houses intervened and my discovery caused no alarm. My parents, retracing the path, notified Dr. Green, a retired and retiring widower whose given name I never learned. They owned two acres; he, I would guess in retrospect, at least fifteen. Then there was Miss Walker's estate, in back of both properties, and lending them a bit more wildlife, such as the foxes that threatened my chickens. She was a

*Edward Hoagland has published nineteen books and lives in Vermont.*

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fiftyish spinster, with servants, who may have had about three times as much land. My parents had never met her, but she caught me trespassing as a "nature boy" once or twice—climbing the spruces in her overgrown fields—and summoned me inside her manorial stone house (ours and Dr. Green's were white clapboard) and gave me and the friend who was with me a proper glass of apple juice with chocolate-chip cookies. A real-estate agent who wanted to subdivide the place surprised me too and was less friendly, afraid that I might start a wildfire, but I would sooner have harmed myself, and I think Miss Walker surmised as much and knew you couldn't stop a boy from crossing stone walls and wire fences.

The pond was the great revelation, after, first, the stream and before I could climb a sixty-foot Norway spruce and swing with the wind. Amber, black, and silver, with moss on one bank and cattails on another, it had frogs plopping—leopard and green frogs and bullfrogs with large eardrums who said *jugarum*. I saw crayfish and a ribbon snake, yellow-striped, and a muskrat swimming in a moving V. Greenish pollywogs and salamanders. The pines, in retrospect, were red pines, and red squirrels of course were chattering in them from all angles, much more vociferous than the gray squirrels that nested in the maple shade trees in front of our house. Also my dog, Flash, an English setter and constant companion, who barked at them, sniffed out an opossum, longhaired, long nosed, pouched like a miniature kangaroo, who promptly swooned and played dead when I picked it up by the tail, just as it was supposed to do. The pines, with their thousand jewely shards of light as you looked up on a sunny day, didn't like

*My parents thought that nature and writing were dodges that might derail a more respectable career in law or medicine*

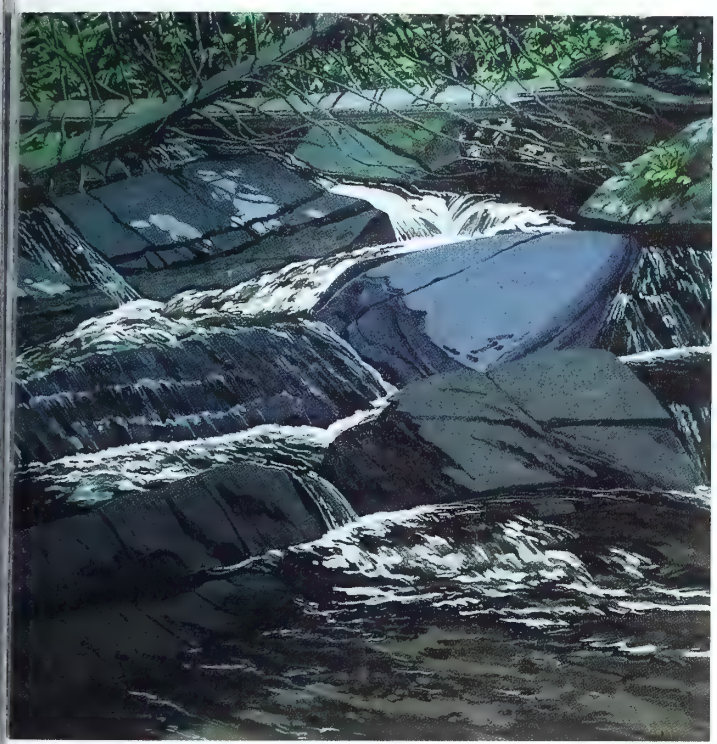
wetting their feet and gave way to white birches whose curling strips of bark you could write on not just with a pencil but with your fingernail if you had to, and dark hemlocks, droopy-branched and unbelievably tall and somber, in the soggy ground, while the pond itself might be as bright as a lens of glass, with tree crowns, mackerel clouds, and blue sky reflected on its surface.

I was a good student and not as friendless or solitary as this may sound. My trouble was a bad stutter that made Flash's companionship and the flock of chickens and communing out-of-doors important to me. But I generally had an intimate friend of my own age whom I could lead to these precious places—Miss Walker's lordly spruces, like the beanstalk that Jack climbed, or Dr. Green's mi ulous, jam-packed pond—discovering, howe to my astonishment, that they didn't matte much to him. He would prefer listening to M Allen broadcast the Yankee games with me, g siping about our class, inventing piratical schen Ice-skating, yes, we shared, or throwing ro into the water to watch the thumping splash, when we were past the volcanic stage, why go? Green was a cranky, softhearted soul almost old to walk to his pond by the time I discove it, but he made the effort to inspect both me a it when he heard from his gardener that I w there, telling me not to treat the frogs inhuman or to fall through the ice. Brooks, the silent Iris man whom he had long employed, had no int est in woods or ponds, so I seldom encounter him, and he was easy to avoid, sitting smoking his chilly greenhouse—just nodded at me as an a thorized visitor if we did chance to meet.

I saw a mink trap an eel, and a musk turtle di ing out of reach on the bottom, and tree frogs the bushes, and "pumpkinseeds," or sunfis learned how to fish with a worm and a pole. blue heron bigger than me would sometimes fl over from the larger ponds (Dr. Green's, thou huge to a ten-year-old, may have been scarce an acre in size) after amphibians. Or on my r peated expeditions I might see a kingfisher di ing for shiners. Nobody could spot me from th road as I circled the water, looking at the strang jointed plants called horsetails, or ferns at th margins. The ordeal of stuttering at scho seemed distant indeed, and I was learning ho to swim well enough at my parents' country clu not to be a danger to myself if I fell in. I wa cautious anyway, as stutterers must be if they a to survive—bicycled home after swimmin lessons, before I'd have to try to talk to people o the patio. I could talk to Flash with absolut abandon, and loved Mel Allen, and Tomm Henrich, "Old Reliable," the Yankees' right field er, and watched the New Hampshire Reds' soci goings-on like a budding ethnologist, though tended to downplay my various excitements i the house lest they be restricted or used agains me. It was not a silly instinct because my parent did soon tell me I was reading too much, and b prep school were telling my favorite teacher that I was too intrigued by nature and writing that these were dodges due to my handicap an might derail a more respectable career in law o medicine—angering the teachers wh nurtured me.

I was an only child until, at ten, we adopte a three-month-old baby girl named Mary Eliza beth, from Chicago. So this event may have beer another force pushing me into the woods. With in a few years she and I became close, though ir

beginning I used to proclaim that she wasn't "real sister" in order to watch my mother's dis- s. And from the pond, after school, I would of- go uphill, not back along the stream, to Dr. een's house, skirting both Brooks and, in par- ılar, the doctor himself. That is, he was al- ys indoors, but I would take care not to be ırd in his bedroom or sitting room upstairs,



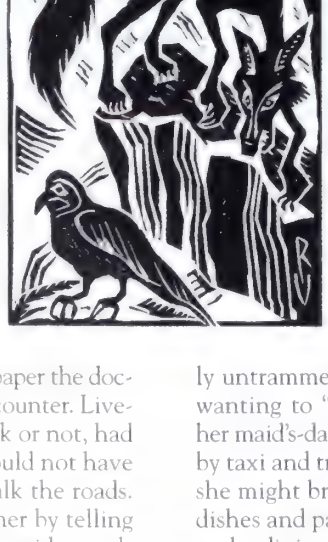
ıd knock softly instead at the kitchen door so at Hope alone heard me. She, as cook, like ooks, had worked for Dr. Green for many years ıt had not established the same fellow feeling. ıe was brown-skinned and tacitly more intelli- nt and ironic than Brooks was, and took good ıre of her employer without receiving the hearty though formal daily greetings Brooks did. He was hite and had a family in town to repair to, which so made him more of an equal, perhaps, than a rge-waisted, large-breasted, light-colored Negress ı a pink uniform, far from wherever her grown- ɔ children were located, or other friends. Being nall and mute, I never inquired of Hope where ıe had originated. I was grateful for her kindness ı inviting me in, to sit on a white chair, with the itchen clock ticking and the scents of baking. ike the pond, it soon became a dependable sanc- ıary where nobody asked me to speak. We sim- ly sat quietly, she with her hands in her ample ıp, while Flash and the doctor's cocker spaniel ıy down together on the back porch. Sometimes forgot my handicap, but if we talked for a minute it was in low tones so that the lonely doctor wouldn't tromp downstairs and interrupt us, asking angrily why I hadn't come to see him. To a little boy he appeared formidably crabby and diagnostic—naturally wanting to hear, analyze, and cure my stutter.

Jimmy Dunn, in the house on the other side of ours, was a good playmate for cards and chess and imaginary games; and Tommy Hunt, at whose house the school bus stopped, was a likable guy—he eventually became a minister—more mature than us, who worked on a jalopy about as much as I went to the pond and had a crush on the girlfriend of our football quarterback, who became an airline pilot after high school and college, when she married him. By eighth grade I had a silent crush on her too; she was our most down-to-earth, approachable blonde. Though nobody picked on me, some of the other boys collected at Tommy's after the bus dropped us off for BB-gun fights or to drive that hoodless jalopy around and around Tommy's parents' vacant field or to squeeze each other's balls in the bedroom in a manhood test or to tie each other up or masturbate their dogs, including mine if they could catch him (to my cowardly shame). I sometimes hunted rats with Flash in our relic barn with my own BB gun, after I had ceased to need to seek out Hope so much. But the wonder isn't why these kids didn't beat me up—even the Kane boys, sons of a drunken "black Irish" gardener, gap-toothed, tricky and sly, who threw stones at cars and went to the public school, not ours, did not, though I was certainly warier when crossing their employer's meadow—as much as why nobody ever has. Not when I honeycombed Boston on foot for years and New York for decades in late-night walks, or in five trips to Africa and nine to Alaska, and so on. I don't need to belabor the point, but neither cowardice nor caution alone explains it. A naturalist's and a stutterer's intuition maybe more so—I've swung around and looked into an approaching mugger's eyes occasionally, which caused him to sheer off—and a berserk streak that I have when sufficiently angered that perhaps sets other people back on their heels long enough for a bad situation to defuse. Stutterers learn to distinguish genuine danger

st Twin Brook, by Neil Welliver. Courtesy [illegible] Gallery, New York City.

from the ersatz, and also to manipulate their anger for the fluency that a shot of adrenalin will momentarily bestow. And they may develop a well of empathy that, again, deflects the rage of sufferers looking for someone to attack, and learn to distinguish the fulcrum of power in any group. While bullies, for example, will persecute the closest target, real predators look into the middle distance—as I learned in my late teens when taking care of lions and tigers in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. So you avoid a bully, but stand in closer proximity to a predator and join him in gazing out.

Girls were another puzzle. One of my sister's baby-sitters would coax me to lie on the sofa with my head in her lap, before I was ready to, so that she could practice what she wanted to do when she was with her boyfriend. Or she would ask me to reach for something on a high shelf, then press her breasts against my back, as if to help. At a dancing class another girl taught me to cut in on her when she was burdened with a partner she didn't like, but after I took this to mean she was partial to me she got mad because I cut in on her when she was fox-trotting with a boy whom she *did* like. Dr. Green died while I was away at boarding school, so I can't recall whether Hope retired somewhere down South, being of an age to, or sought other employment. But she was authentically welcoming to me, and suitably erotic to a prepubescent too, sitting catty-corner to me across from the big old-fashioned stove and oven—with invariably a roast in it for the solitary old man upstairs—and her hands loosely clasped, a gentle expression, big hips, lax bosom, and her uniform collar unbuttoned. I was never interrupting anything; she'd have the clock to listen to, the radio on low, a newspaper the doctor had finished with folded on the counter. Live-in maids in our neighborhood, black or not, had no cars to visit one another and would not have been permitted by the police to walk the roads. I took care not to trigger my stammer by telling her I had just seen watercress, water striders, eelgrass, mudpuppies, duckweed, pickerelweed, horned pout, and water with trembling algae, wavy larvae, and waterlogged trees like slumbering alligators three feet down. The clouds had piled up like smoke signals over the pond and the pines, and I had nibbled rock tripe and touch-me-nots. One winter I'd accidentally angered a friend by grabbing at him as I fell through the ice, pulling him into an icy bath. Our families thought, oh, dirty water, but I knew that, no was where life lived, and part of my heart twenty I would be climbing unobserved int mountain lion's cage, but already I trusted faith in nature and was biking to larger pon then every week or two basking in my sec refuge at Hope's kitchen. I didn't eat there stay as long as an hour, just dropped to decompress, resting.



Hope was not the first colored person known. (The term "black" then was an epithet insult, equivalent to "nigra.") When my moth brought my baby sister home on the train from t Chicago adoption agency, she had hired a wom from the South named Arizona, much young than Hope, vigorous, boisterous, taller, dark and less acclimated to the behavior expected of s vants in an upscale Wasp suburb up North. S was a blithe spirit, as I remember her, assertiv gleeful, expansive, loud and goofy with me whe to tease her, I'd pull on the bow of her apr strings—which, though I was about ten or eleve quickly alarmed my Missouri-born father as, I su pose, proto-miscegenation. Ir few years he would begin bo cotting the Metropolitan Ope for permitting the great bla contralto Marian Anderson sing on its stage. Arizona h big buttocks under the thin fa ric of her uniform that made t butterfly of the bow doub tempting, and he perceived sexual element in our giggle My mother, not being from former slave state, was more sta tled by Arizona's guileless tales growing up barefoot in a hov and chewing her own babie meals for them when she coul n't afford to buy prepared foo It sounded unsanitary, barba ian, "African," like her strang ly untrammeled name (evocative to me now wanting to "light out for the Territories") a her maid's-day-off visits every Thursday to Harle by taxi and train. Goodness knows what diseas she might bring back to her attic room and o dishes and pantry. My mother rang a tinkly be at the dining-room table, rather than possibly i terrupt a polite conversation with guests, to c Arizona to clear each course off the table, b Arizona didn't seem to fathom the gentility the ritual; was likely to holler out helpfully to a what was wanted. So they got rid of her, my f ther believing afterward that it reduced a pro erty's value, at least in Connecticut, if a co ored person had ever lived in it, even in servant's capacity.

I learned from the episode not to betray to a ird party affection for anybody who might get ed because of it, or to divulge any passion that ght thereafter be denied me. "I'm going to e pond," I'd say casually to my mother; then dge carefully past the stolid, deracinated ooks (like a tug-on-the-forelock-when-the-ntry-go-past footman), toward the trillium d columbine, the toadstools and fairy-ring ushrooms, the nematodes and myriapods, the ueberries or blackberries, near the opaque yet iny stretch of hidden water, deep here, shal-w there, with the wind ruffling the surface to nceal such factual matters, and cold at its let but warm where it fed into a creek that ran the Silvermine River and finally the ocean. etting hold of a live-trap, I caught a couple of easels that screamed at me through the mesh til I released them, and a burglar-masked on, and the inevitable beautifully white-ped skunk, who didn't let me have it when I t him go.

The plopping raindrops, wobbly riffles, osscurrent zephyrs, the penny-sized and nny-colored springs that replenished the argins of the pond from underground, plum-g hazel-colored, endlessly rising-and-falling dividual grains of sand, irislike around the ack pupil of the actual hole, lent variance to ie velvet water, near dusk, or bright morn-gs, when it shone in the mini-forest like a rclet of steel. During a thunderstorm it ethed, fingered madly. Then when the clouds eared off, in the batty moonlight, the shad-ws seemed crafted differently than might be ast by any sun. I was delighted watching bats utter after hatching mosquitoes in the wet-nd that bulwarked the pond, and thrilled hen the pair of barn owls that nested in an oandoned water tower on the hill would riek as they skimmed across Miss Walker's econd growth. It was more frightening to be lone upstairs in my own house at night than o tiptoe about the woods. Nor was it as scary eering at a copperhead on a ledge one noon-me that a schoolmate whose mother was a irdwatcher took me to see. And I loved the hirligig beetles and water boatmen, the dam-elflies and fireflies, the sticklebacks and fresh-ater snails. My favorite turtles were the wood urtles, *Clemmys insculpta*, seven or eight inch-s long, that have almost disappeared from New England now, with their sculptured cara-aces, like Cellini's metalwork, and salmon-ed legs, which I would watch breed in the tream in the spring, but that roamed the fields ntil hibernation time, when they'd return gain to the streambed's leaves and mud.

Snappers lurked in the muck of the pond ear-round, platter-sized, but didn't bite if you left them there, even if you happened to step quite close or purposely touched their serrated tails: only if you picked up a female on her big day in June when she left the water to lay her eggs. The bottom, when you waded, was paint-ed with fallen leaves and so varied you'd stand with one foot sucked ankle-deep and the other supported on hard feldspar sand—little fish angrily nipping at you because you had begun to infringe on their nesting terrain—and one warm but one chilled, and a branch knifing out

*It was more frightening to be alone upstairs in my own house at night than to tiptoe about the woods*

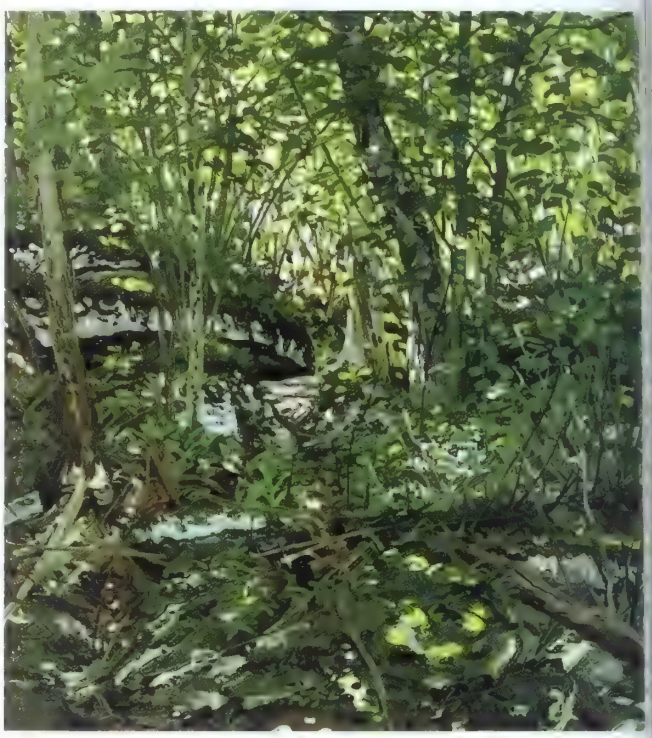
of the water alongside you much like a fin. Wood frogs and peepers were to be found in the bushes, and a water snake tasseled in lovely rus-sets and tans somewhere down the bank. A green frog or bullfrog couldn't survive the snake's visits simply by holding its breath underwater; it had to swim in zigzags or leap fast. But speed was not a defense when the great blue heron, gangly legged, slow flapping, maneuvered down from the sky. It had a spear beak and watched as sternly as a sentinel, once it had landed, for the first frog buried in mud that needed some air. Similarly, a mamma duck might be clever at concealing her ducklings in the reeds from me—but not from the mamma snapping turtle, who grabbed them one by one through the late spring before laying her own eggs. Even a seagull dropped by from Long Island Sound to forage on crappies or whatnot, and Mrs. Morris, my sixth-grade biology teacher, told me that my eels, too, had migrated in from the sea. The Canada geese barked like beagles, going north or south.

On sunny days a certain woodchuck liked to clamber up onto the leaning bough of an apple tree next to the stream and straddle it as com-fortably as if she thought she were not just a ma-triarch but an arboreal creature. I'd face the eth-ical dilemma of whether to notify Flash and provide him some fun at the expense of panick-ing her miserably. An old apple tree's outreach, like that one's, carries an idiosyncratic eloquence because season by season the weight of its fruit has twisted each individual limb. This generos-ity speaks, whereas a white spruce's symmetry is more visually generous, and climbing high to rock with the wind was to plumb a power no truck tire roped like a pendulum to a maple or an oak tree could approach. I'd lie on my back on a patch of moss watching a swaying poplar's

branches interlace with another's, and the tremulous leaves vibrate, and the clouds forgather to parade zoologically overhead, and felt linked to the whole matrix, as you either do or you don't through the rest of your life. And childhood—nine or ten, I think—is when this best happens. It's when you develop a capacity for quiet, a confidence in your solitude, your rapport with a Nature both animate and not so much so: what winged things possibly feel, the blessing of water, the rhythm of weather, and what might bite you and what will not. In the circus a tapir, a tiger, a mandrill, a rhino, but building really upon the calm that Dr. Green's modest woods and pond, forty-five miles out of New York City, had bestowed on me.

Nature indoors—that plump bobby-soxer stroking my hair while holding my head in her lap to practice up for her boyfriend—made me more jittery, but I was not really somebody who "liked animals more than people," as the cliché goes. Animals didn't sometimes smile sardonically or in wonderment when I stuttered and avert their eyes, turn their backs, but I had close friends and was enjoying my sister's presence now too. I loved her, and even found she was deflecting about the right amount of attention away from me in family politics (but not too much). I didn't go swimming in crashing surf or lightning flashes or climb cliffs with ropes and pitons or kayak in whitewater rapids or spelunk claustrophobically. I wasn't trying to conquer nature or prove my testosterone. But nature as simply night or a height or a lonely menagerie animal or a small limestone cave to crawl down in or the lip of the crest of an unpretentious mountain to hunker on for an hour felt just right, and often as if my throttled mouth and bottled-up emotions had engendered a sort of telepathy in me. Not of course to warn of inanimate events, like a flash flood or a rock slide, but the bear around the bend or the desired milk snake in the woodshed. My sixth sense was unstoppered.

I never totaled a car (machines may not have interested me enough) or broke my bones, and had an upbeat view of life, experiencing the kindness of many strangers when I hitchhiked, for instance. I speculated as to what the anthropological purpose could be of the brimming, broad-gauge affection people like me felt when watching a wriggling tadpole or clouds wreathing a massif—sights that have no reproductive or nutritional aspect. Call it "biophilia"—it wasn't in response to a hunter's blur hunger, or kinship-protective, or sexual in some way. Was it a religious wellspring, then? Silence and solitude are fertile if the aptitude is there, and love in its wider applications is also, I think, an aptitude, like the capacity for romantic love, indeed—stilling for a few minutes the chatterbox in us. That massif wreathed in clouds, or the modest pond that has been left in peace to breed its toads, is not a godhead. Like



sparks flung out, each perhaps is evidence instead (as are our empathy and exuberance) but not a locus. And yet a link seems to need to take hold somewhere around nine, ten, or eleven—about Mowgli's age, in Kipling—between the onset of one's ability to marinate in the spices of solitude, in other words, and puberty, when the emphasis will shift to contact sports, or dress and other sexual ploys and fantasies or calculations.

But nine was fine; and when you came to feel at home in Connecticut's woods, New Hampshire's were not a large step up the ladder, or Wyoming's expansive mountains after that, then California's by twenty, building toward British Columbia's and Alaska's, Africa's and India's, in the course of the future. The sea was different, however. I admired it from the beach or a steamship but never acquired the noncha-



*Project* by Neil Welliver. Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York City

ce required for solo sailing; was afraid of wning. On the other hand, having been n in New York City and then returned to there as an adult, I loved metropolises and no conflict between exulting in their mag- ism and in wild places. Human nature is erstitial with nature and not to be shunned a naturalist. This accidental ambidexterity iched my traveling because I enjoyed land- and staying awhile in London on the way to rica, or exploring Bombay and Calcutta en ite to Coimbatore or Dibrugarh. Didn't just nt to hurry on to a tribal or wildlife wilder- ss area without first poking around in these at cities, which I rejoiced in as much. though there are now far too many people for ture to digest, we are all going to go down gether, I believe. We are part and parcel of it, d as it sickens so will we.

In the meantime, joy is joy: the blue and yel- v stripes of a perfect day, with green effusive es and the dramatic shapes of the streaming uds. Our moods can be altered simply by sun- ht, and I found that having cared for primates, affes, and big cats in the circus made it easier meander almost anywhere. Few people were arier than a tiger, or lovelier than a striding affe, or more poignant than our brethren, the imps and orangutans, and you can often dis- n an adversary if you recognize the poignancy him. Nevertheless, I preferred to step off the ad, when I was walking in the woods at night d saw headlights approaching. Better to take e's chances with any creature that might con- ivably be lurking there than with the poten- l aberrations of the drive-by human being hind the wheel. It may seem contradictory at for reverence and revelation one needs a lance. You can be staggered by the feast of nsations out-of-doors, but not staggering. Your ns ought to be under you and your eyes cused. As in music, where beauty lodges not in e note but in combining many, your pleasure rges from the counterpoint of saplings and indthrow, or the moon and snow. Both are pale d cold, yet mysteriously scrimshawed—the oon by craters, mountains, and lava flows, the ow by swaying withes or maybe a buck's feet d antler tines. Although like snow, the moon ill disappear predictably and reappear when it's pposed to, moonlight is an elixir with mystical verberations that we can pine and yet grin ver, even when "empty-armed." It's off-the- op, a private swatch of time, unaccountable to nybody else if we have paused to gaze upward, d not burdened with the responsibility of aming birdcalls, identifying flowers, or the ther complications of the hobby of nature udy. One just admires a sickle moon, half- oon, full moon that, weightless and yet punc- tual, rises, hovering. Sometimes it may seem almost as if underwater, the way its dimensions and yellow-ruddy coloring appear to change—butter, or russet, or polar. The Hungry Moon, Harvest Moon, Hunter Moon, are each emotional, and expertise about their candlepower or mileage from the earth a bit extraneous. Although our own cycles are no longer tied to whether they are waning or gibbous, we feel a vestigial tropism. This is our moon. *It's full*, we'll murmur; or *It's a crescent*, or like a cradle lying partly tipped. And a new moon is no moon.

Twilight, the stalking hour, itself can energize us to go out and employ that natural itch to put our best foot forward and "socialize." The collared neck, the twitching calf, and tumid penis will respond to daylight's variations or the moonrise, as we gulp raw oysters and crunch soft-shelled crabs that still possess that *caught* quality, not like precooked pig or processed cow. If we've lost the sense of astrological spell and navigational exigency that the stars' constellations used to hold, we at least present fragrant bouquets and suck the legs of briny lobsters like savages on important occasions. The stunning galaxies have been diminished to blackboard equations that physicists compute, and our dulled eyes, when we glance up, instead of seeing cryptic patterns and metaphors, settle rather cursorily for the moon.

Water does retain a good deal more of its ancient power to please or panic us. Bouncing downhill in a rocky bed, shouldering into any indentation, and then nurturing fish, mirroring a spectrum of colors, or bulking into waves that hit the spindrift beach at the inducement of the wind, it's the most protean of life's building blocks, the womb of the world. "My god, there's the river!" we will say, in pure delight at the big

*You can be staggered by the feast of sensations out-of-doors, but not staggering. Your pins ought to be under you and your eyes focused*

waterway willows, the glistering currents bounding along like a dozen otters seizing ownership of the place, as we walk within sight. Our bodies, 70 percent water (and our brains more), only mimic the earth's surface in this respect. And we want a mixed and muscular sky, bulging yet depthless, and full of totems, talismans, in the clouds: not every day but when we have the energy for it, just to know that we're alive. Rising land of course will lift our spirits too. Hills, a ridgeline, not to begin toiling right up today but the possibility of doing so, perhaps

used lately, sounding primitive, like kerosene

*Finding a sight line outdoors without buildings, pavement, people, is a task, and we're not awed by other people anymore*

lamps. What's to be awed about in this the Three Wise Men following the Star? what hasn't been explained? Actually, I don't know what *has* been explained. If we are told, for example, that 99 percent of our genes are similar to those of a mouse, does that explain anything? Apprehension, disillusion, disorientation, selfishness, lust, irony, envy, greed, and even self-sacrifice are commonplace: but awe? Society is not annealed enough. Trust and continuity and leadership are deteriorating, and the problem when you are alone is the clutter. Finding even a sight line outdoors without buildings, pavement, people, is a task, and we're not awed by other people anymore: too much of a good thing. We need to glimpse a portion of the axle, the undercarriage, of what it's all about. And mountains (an axis, if not an axle) are harder to be glib about than technological news reports. But if you wait until your mature years to get to know a patch of countryside intimately, thoroughly, your responses may be generic, not specific—just curiosity and good intentions—and you will wind up going in for golf and tennis and power mowers, bypassing nature, instead.

No man was complete without a parrot on his shoulder, I used to think. Pirates had them—or perhaps a monkey with a string knotted around its waist—and far-flung sailors, and naturalists searching the tropics for undiscovered plant and animal species. An Orinoco toucan or an orange epauletted Amazon or hyacinth macaw nibbled at an earlobe or chatted in their ear. At the mouth of the Congo River or the Amazon, hotels had to post a sign saying no parrots were allowed here, and the birds lived so long that in tamer harbors like the U.S.A. you might never know who had taught yours to cry, *What's that down between your legs, big boy?* In the port area of Lower Manhattan which later became the World Trade Center, I used to see foulmouthed merchant seamen [illegible] for sale in a cigar store that also [illegible] patterned shrunken human heads with pained and puckered faces and sewn-up lips which sailors on the coffee or United Fruit banana boats had purchased from tribes such as the famous head-hunting Jivaros of Ecuador. Both the brilliant-colored parrots and the Indian heads, suspended behind the counter by their greasy black braids of hair, had been jungle born, except of course for the especially valuable blonde-tressed heads of white women and their missionary husbands: although, buyer beware, you were supposed to be careful about fakes—maybe monkeys that had been treated and bleached.

And there was a kind of "leopard store," as I thought of it, named Trefflich's, in a brownstone at 215 Fulton Street, close to where a lot of other ships came in to dock from Joseph Conrad countries. It sold jaguar cubs, anacondas, margay cats and ocelots, aoudads and addaxes, baboons, pangolins, gibbons, adolescent elephants—importing wholesale stuff for zoos to a warehouse in New Jersey. But you could walk around the several floors, if you were with your father, and look at giant Seychelles tortoises, reticulated or Burmese pythons, black panthers peering between the slats of cargo crates, and wheedling monkeys whose organ grinder might have died. Carnival owners stopped by in the spring in painted trucks to purchase an iron cage with a sun bear already in it or rent a half-trained lion, or a bunch of monkeys. "When it comes to monkeys," a placard boasted, "we pledge ourselves to give full cooperation to all operators interested in giving the public their monkey's worth!" Beasts in makeshift confinement—an arctic wolf, a rainbow boa, a baby camel—crammed every corner and then in season might be touring the nation's midways, living on roadkills or sick chickens the drivers stopped to pick up, the panther on foundered horses or dead dogs from a pound, the monks on fruit the public bought.

Parrots did not remain a priority for me because I sensed that they were delicate and in considerable peril, though squawking harshly and nipping fingers. Even when a fancier hand strung them by scissoring their flight feathers as if to bauble-ize them, they continued to emit untamable screams and like a peg-leg pirate moved about laboriously by grabbing footholds with their beaks and chimneying up or belaying down in mountaineer fashion. Their shrieks might bring the neighborhood's blue jays to the owner's window as if to try to help a friend in need, and double the noise. Then you'd see the guy abandon a thousand-dollar pet to his local flower shop, where at least it

l the ferns and ficus trees for company. Or
known a parrot or two that escaped from
tivity and shimmied high into a fir tree next
the house, and even in the wintertime sim-
refused to come down. Up, up, the pinioned
l hitched with claws and beak, watching the
lering jays and crows circling around and
eaming gleefully with them. Although of
ırse it couldn't fly, it ate a few tart bits of
k or cone in freedom at their level. The
ma continued for hours—pleas and com-
nds from the ground, and hullabaloo from
whirling wild birds. Then a soft snow start-
falling, as night settled down. The native
cks—warmly plumaged and observing the
wcomer's crippled condition—flew away to
ir sheltered roosts, while the parrot, in its
ght jungle colors, climbed poignantly, sto-
ically higher, to wait in silence to
nibble needles and freeze.

went to summer camp in the Adirondacks,
lped out at an animal hospital near my home,
d, with a friend's family, visited a little dude
nch in the Wind River range at Dubois,
yoming, going out by train
nen I was fourteen. This
owed me that whole tiers of
nd exist that most of us nev-
reach; just look at, perhaps.
y horse could scramble by
itchbacks for a short way, like
adger galumphing. Horses
re more independent-minded
an a dog, preferring the open
nge as a grubstake to any barn
d wintering there for six
nths as uncosseted as the elk
mule deer. The ranch hands
ntered pretty tough, too—not
st drank a lot but practically
bernated in snowed-over cab-
s, living on a wad of cash se-
eted in a coffee can, not a
nk account, and snaring
ckrabbits, eating root-cellar turnips and steaks
ed off a frozen side of beef, by a hissing Cole-
an lantern. They lost their teeth sooner than
isterners, and the men got gimpy at an early age
m being thrown or kicked. Not only the rodeo
pes: many ordinary wranglers were fallen on,
epped on, in breaking horses, roping calves,
ssling a steer, or had slid off an icy road in a
hevy and limped for miles with a broken bone.
elp was so damned far off.

The bristling, pelagic scale of the landscapes,
yscapes, exhilarated me, plus the chance to
tch sight of a cougar by peering up a box canyon,
the coyotes that howled after dark from the
me creek bed where I had walked an hour be-



fore. In these late 1940s the Good War was barely over, evil had been defeated, but a tremor of risk and early death still prickled the mood of many people of middle age: veterans who wouldn't speak of what they'd done, and for whom foreign travel had involved stifling weeks on a troop ship to places they never wanted to lay eyes on again. They squinted and bit their lips, thinking back. Fred, the one cowhand I got to know somewhat—who taught me to ride in a roundup and shoot ground squirrels, and talked confidingly toward the end—was both mild in manner and steadfast, yet lamed internally, with a cowboy's kidney disabilities and a flat-wallet winter to look ahead to. As with Hope, I can't reconstruct our conversations from sixty years ago, except that there were many factualities for me to learn, glued to yearnings Fred might even help me fulfill. Our talk was less inchoate. Childless from knocking around the West all his life, he was sympathetic to my wish to hear stories of mega-wildlife, trapper-hermits, gold prospecting, bigfoot myths, and not just rehearse my saddle skills like the other dudes. That West was already threadbare but not skeletal, and I learned that when somebody in the know recognizes what you care about, he may earnestly try to help. Antelope, moose, and marmots—"whistlers"—we looked for, and falling-down cabins in draws that had yarns attached to them. Fred was slightly built, like a person who dealt with creatures so large that heft itself hardly mattered, compared with logic and telepathy. He sized up people quietly too, and minimized his reactions if he could, the way you would with a haywire heifer or bull.

Act purposefully but minimally and keep your reasons under wraps, was a lesson he taught me. Not the whole formula for life, but quite a beginning, because love and openness to what you love are fragile and yet will flower if cupped and sunlit: as will a freelance toughness and survivability, when you need that. Like a certain helicopter pilot in the Brooks Range in Alaska who flew me around decades later, Fred grounded my enthusiasms at the same time that perhaps mine reinforced his. I couldn't help him face an old age of penury, but we were wistful when this summer interlude wound up. Teasing so many memories out of his mind had cheered him up, made him feel that they were worth it, and as in a relay race, he was passing along nuggets to me, not necessarily from his own life but that turn-of-the-century horse wranglers had conveyed to him. Just so, we elasticize

our lives—as you'll see, I am, school [illegible] in an aquarium. As quick as mercury and multidirectional, they impart a darkly silver, wriggly sorcery to the cubic inches of the tank. Instead of gallons, it becomes like having a miniplanetarium in the house, because the stars also sometimes seem to swim in the sky, not just hang in suspension there.

Pets in containers, or loose as catty companions or doggy slaves, can hardly fill in for the immensity of wind, stars, and trees, the infinity of unlobotomized animal species, the intricacy of landscapes, the galaxy of scents and shapes in natural creation, that we are losing, or just no longer sense or see. A planetarium is not the heavens, or an aquarium the southern oceans, and our own intricacy—our bristly whiskers, flaring nostrils, our fingerpads flicking in and out as ceaselessly as gills, our curling pinnae and peripheral vision and intuitive antennae, all seeking connections—perhaps demands them. Only 2 percent of Americans are farmers now, and yet the rest of us are still avid for spring's green-up and weather forecasts. Without the primeval dangers that formed us, we tune in bruising professional football or pore through the tabloids for raunchy murders, sexual triangles and kidnappings, news of disease, greedy scandals. We actually learn skills of the chase and the feint from these, learn about insanity and bad judgment and to control our spates of rage, to cushion our marriages, downsize our fantasies, put the brakes on our Neanderthal instincts. The tabloids are appetite-rich and Darwinian. We read them for meat and war games, or watch the tube for boobs that we can't ogle in real life, and truth or consequences—robbers punished—while rejiggering our minds' chemistry with pills, replacing an aging hip with titanium, and exercising on a gym machine, or facelifting our long-suffering skin.

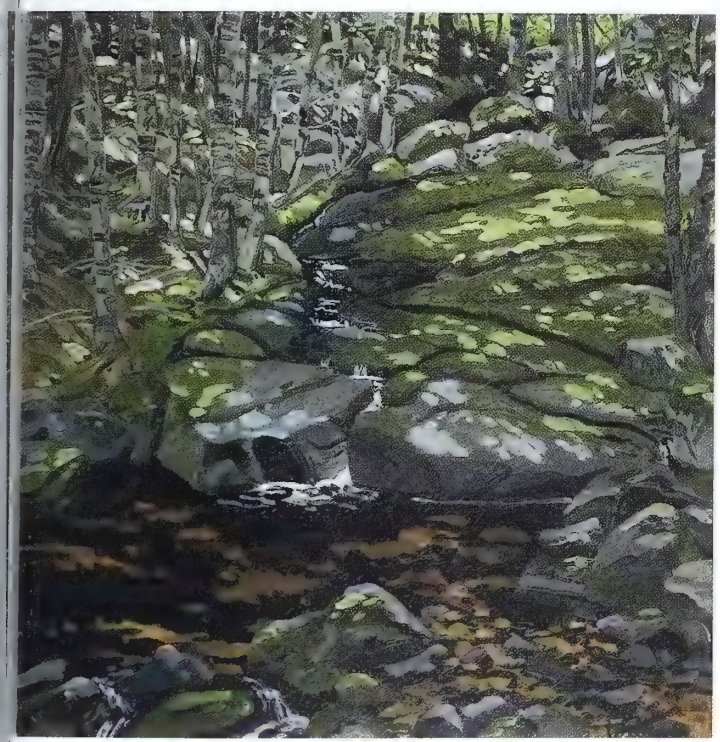
*Pets in containers can hardly fill in for the galaxy of scents and shapes in natural creation that we are losing or no longer sense or see*

But I seem to have gained, around eight, nine, or ten, the rather precious sense of continuity that knows that when you come out of the woods into a house it's only temporary; you will be going back out again. People are less amphibious or ambidextrous in this regard than they used to be. A thousand or so may have topped Mt. Everest ("Well we knocked the bastard off," Sir Edmund Hillary famous said, after conquering it in 1953), and plen run marathons or balance on surfboards. Ye more authentic affinity with what we c nature is being lost even faster than natu itself. Into the void slips obsessional pornog phy, fundamentalist religion, strobe-ligh showbiz (no Bing Crosby or Frank Sinatr who blazed on forever), and squirmy corpora flacks such as the old power brokers seldo employed. If gyms don't substitute for walkin it's hard to find a place to walk, as houses li every beachfront and scissor every patch woods with cul-de-sacs for real estate. You ma prefer the ubiquity of electricity to seeing fiel of stars after dark, but losing constellatio after constellation in the night, and countle water meadows along uncontoured rivers, an bushy-tailed horizons, may be a titanic chang Our motors similarly wipe out the buzz an songs of insects, birds, the sibilation of th breezes that hunters used to front, alway stalking into the wind and studying the fol of the terrain for how it flowed, because mea were won by knowing the intimacies of th wind. To lose moonlight, and compass place ment, and grasshoppers telling us the tempera ture by the intensity of their sound, poses th question of whether we *can* safely do away wit everything else. The ecology of solitary con finement on this planet may be calamitous: no to mention the sadness. To assuage the emo tional effects, already one notices an explo sion of plant nurseries, pet stores, computer simulated androids, and television animation We've boarded up our windows so as to liv interiorly with just our own inventions—though sensing too that we are in the grip of slow, systemic illness, somehow pervasive—a meanwhile chimpanzees are being eaten u wholesale in Africa as "bushmeat," the ele phants butchered, the lions poisoned.

I knew these signature animals by the age o eighteen because I worked for two summers i a circus where we had in our charge some of th most glorious and legendary wilderness crea tures. Asian elephants, Sumatran and Siberia and Bengal tigers, a cheetah, a hippo, a jagua pythons and boas, three lowland gorillas, rhino, and an orangutan. My mentor then wa a Mohawk Indian, from a culture that was com parably endangered. Indeed, he finished ou the remainder of his years as a groom at the rid ing stable that services New York's yuppi equestrians who ride in Central Park, befor having his ashes scattered off of the Georg Washington Bridge into the Hudson Rive which are immemorial waters for the Mo hawks. But the survival of wild places and wil things, like the permanence of noteworth

nitecture, or the opera, a multiplicity of languages, or old shade trees in old neighborhoods, is not a priority for most people. They on their way out, and you simply love and e them as you, too, shuffle along.

But the elephants, wrinkled in their sagging es, appeared to recognize the tenor of events. ey were not optimistic—at least I thought —and forty years later, seeing shattered herds ndia and Africa, I was surer still that they reed that the road for them shambled off down. Their anxiety was more than jumpy; it ned demoralized. Their bizarre hugeness only omed them further. We generally discover imtant things late: like how very closely the at apes' genome resembles ours. This was



vious to the naked eye and won't prevent ld ones from being eaten in Africa, but makes eir treatment here in captivity more appalling. nd thus it was with elephants' infrasonic comunications, which supplement the squeals and umpeting we hear. It took a former whale biogist, Katie Payne, who had helped record the gh frequencies humpbacks sometimes use, beond the capacity of a human ear, to figure out at elephants also talk at acoustic (though subnic) levels we can't detect, and that these ep sound waves travel as messages for surising distances, from herd to herd (yet nothg like what the ocean's physics can accomish for certain whales' low-voiced emotings).

The more complexities we come to know about a fellow being, the less cavalier we're going to feel when its kin are wiped out. Most species that disappear, of course, have never been examined or "discovered" at all. But with the jumbo kind—formerly demonized as rogues, or boat swampers and living oil wells—we have a good deal less excuse. Indeed, in the circus, decades before Katie Payne's breakthrough, I had experienced intimations that within our single herd, animals a hundred yards apart could convey their politics or frustrations by sounds below the lowest range that people heard. They would be clearly communing across the field, looking at each other, swinging their trunks convivially and swaying with eloquent body language, until after a minute or so the session ended with a strain of sound finally edging up into a low-pitched groan. I was eighteen, nineteen, not a scientist, and these insights were accompanied by a swarm of others about our giant, protean, poignant beasts—Ruth and Modoc and twenty others—whose feet I liked to lie close to, testing my trust in the rapport I thought I had with their rhythms and whims. Acoustics were not the reason I was touched or central to what I was trying to comprehend, even when they stood there forthrightly and frontally, broadcasting sounds I sometimes intuited but couldn't hear.

In East Africa on two trips during the 1970s, I saw pristine herds on the vastness of the veldt, browsing slowly among the thorn trees as creatures do when engaged in being themselves. Although they were being poached, the horizons were huge, and the scale of ivory-hunting an attrition they could bear. Their humor, gait, and dignity were intact, the tutoring of the calves, the playfulness of bathing, the virtuoso trunks spraying dust when insects annoyed them, or plucking an epicurean shoot, or squealing at a stork. By the 1990s, however, when I returned twice again, the splintered groups, targeted by Somalis with Kalashnikovs, had witnessed so much butchery and anguish—their numbers more than halved—that they acted as if danger were everywhere. They drank at the water holes twitchily, hastily, and migrated between their feeding groves without the ambling ambience of

dy for Photon, by Neil Welliver. Courtesy [illegible] Gallery, New York City.

old. Like the chimps I saw, they didn't just react to immediacies, as, for instance, the big cats did, but appeared to worry in advance. They weren't freewheeling personalities anymore, and it was a relief to meet a noncommittal aardvark or a snoopy jackal on the track.

Nature throbs in us through our digestive gases, sweaty odors, wrist pulse, unruly penis or bloody vulva, and nervy tics. We flinch, gasp, fuck, cluck, grin, blink, panic, run, fight, sleep, wake, and wolf a meal like animals. Our official seven deadly sins are rather animal, too, and so is bliss, I think: not only lust but that out-of-body happiness you may feel when being quite still, yet aware and self-contained. Nature is continuity with a matrix and not about causing a stir in the world, and as we destroy our links to other forms of life, it's like whittling at our heels and shins and toes. You can do it for a while until you cut a tendon, nick a bone, and find you limp. And we've now done that. Life turns into more of a riddle when not braided together with other manifestations of energy, grace, scale, and harmonics or tempo and all the rest. Humanity all alone can be constricting, and I've met more blithe spirits in frontier situations than anywhere else. They weren't the quickest conversationalists or most educated, and inevitably there were also augured souls who had fled to the mountains to get as far away from other people as they could. But as George Orwell remarked at the end of his diaries, "At 50, everyone has the face he deserves" (alas, he didn't live that long); and these guys from the era of the First World War or the Depression, living on the Skeena River or the Stikine, in British Columbia and Alaska—the Spatsizi or the Omineca, the Klappan or the Kuskokwim, the Tanana or the Porcupine—when you hollered to them from the footpath and they came out of their cabins, looked blithe. They were likely to wear long johns all year round, and light the woodstove every morning regardless of how warmly the sun might be going to shine, because you never know. Anyway, smoke and long johns discourage mosquitoes, and if you've ever been profoundly cold you won't mind being over-warm.



They were on the lookout for gold colorations in the creek beds as we walked about, and before fall got well started they would be laying in a mammoth woodpile, and extra rations under the floorboards, and boiling and re-scenting their fur traps, then, after a hard frost, throwing ca bou carcasses up on the pitched roof, whe they'd keep. I made sure not to take them u wolves—because was this an individual w lived out here with the elements because he h abandoned everybody who had ever trusted hi or because of what he'd *sought*? With men thi ty years older than me and at home with t tessitura of the wilderness in the 1960s, y didn't need to be a psychologist to arrive at son swift conclusions, mostly cheerful ones. A ge eral competence, plus maybe the yearly salm runs, had enabled them to ride out the six mont of winter, as well as the specters that can affl a solitary mind. If a man's smile looked to b guyed out as securely as a well-staked tent, meant he probably grinned a lot, if only to hi self, and wasn't about to blow away.

My hunches in the main worked out, and mo importantly I escaped the confines of my stutt and gradually became able to talk to people as ea ily as to animals. Being a humanist, I was not interested in animals but, in the Whitman mod aspired to contain multitudes, which include being a mutt and hybrid oneself, snaky, fish foxy, and as Afro-Indo-European as our fa trekking forefathers. Althoug I was living in New York City b this time and married, and there fore swinging as if in a bathy sphere into some of these roac less valleys in the far Northwes with my pack and sleeping bag I felt at home on a moose pat too. My spirit keyed into th tuning fork of old melodies—not simply the sense of trust had acquired in Dr. Green woods, but the narratives, think, behind us all. In back c Gilgamesh and Beowulf, Home Hardy, and Melville, lie impuls es of animism that personifie the sweet wellsprings and omi nous cliffs, the mountaintop and antique trees as godlings fo our ancestors, and the fact that primates are talk ing to lions even today. Baboons are arguing with them on a Tanzanian plain and fathoming thei reactions much as I was often doing half a cen tury ago in the Ringling Bros. Circus. We slee in edgy surges of a few hours that we manage t combine into a night's civilized schedule, ye would have more logic for a chimp in the fores or a baboon on the veldt, rousing from each na to glance around for a leopard's dappled coa creeping through the gloaming.

Life is so elastic that people whose circum stances appear to be about the same may mea sure themselves as almost anywhere on a con

ıum from misery to elation, and nature her- is invoked to justify fidelity or infidelity, tol- nce or violence. I've never thought of nature a guardian angel, but rather as a polychro- tic thrum you sway and hum along with and refore are not caught by surprise by a sudden dering in the weather, a hyena on a kill, or a gy bowl of landscape, when you're hiking. hough never a daredevil, I didn't believe t we can live quite wholeheartedly if we are erly afraid of dying, but, on the other hand, n't think if life gets boring you have to climb airy mountain. Just pick your calluses off and esh your sensibilities. The airiest scenery e been privileged to see was in the malayan foothills of Arunachal Pradesh, ween Assam and Tibet in northeast India. I didn't stand there yearning to scale and p" the greenly rising and then vertiginous ges that towered toward snow peaks like lad- ed but amorphous ghosts, muscular and por- ıtous beyond the mists. I wanted to let them And similarly I plan not to be cremated, so ıt the proverbial worms can do a recycling on me after I die, rather than be rendered o tidy, sterile minerals in an undertaker's fur- ce: a less juicy fate.

Now, animals live even more in the present ın we do. They are geographic or hierarchical organization, operating by rote or scented emories of previous hazards and good fortune, eking food with smaller brains but not wistful out it, as you'll notice watching a fox glance at suet in a birdfeeder without wasting ener- in pining after a bite of it. Short and brutish s been a description of their lives ("brutish" ing somewhat tautological), but certainly the es of what are called the megafauna are get- ıg shorter while ours grow longer. Some peo- e scarcely know what to do with their bonus ne—doubled life spans, plus the round-the- ock availability of artificial light—because ıture doesn't deal in bonuses. The sun rises ıd sets when it did a million years ago, with ylight altering by immemorial increments as e planet rolls. It doesn't award you an extra ur if you have a deadline. *Can you make it?* ıture asks instead, if it says anything at all. But condly, and curiously, I think, it speaks in rms of glee. Glee is like the froth on beer or coa. Not especially necessary or Darwinian, s not the carrot that balances the stick, cause quieter forms of contentment exist to ward efficiency. Glee is effervescence. It's bub- es in the water—beyond efficiency—which ur thirst doesn't actually need.

Bubbles are physics, not biology, and glee, if ıe analogy is to carry far, may be an artesian rce more primordial than evolutionary. To ıe, it's not a marker for genetic advantages such as earning more, but an indicator that life—the thread of Creation, the relic current that has lasted all this way—is ebullient. Still, you might argue that the choosiest females select not just for strength and money or its zoological equivalents, but for the superfluous energy that humor and panache imply. The woodpecker drumming an irregular tattoo on my tin roof in the spring is not mechanistic in his ritual, as if merely to prove that he could dig big bugs out of a tree and bring them to his mate. His zest and syncopation is like when you

***I've never thought of nature as a guardian angel, but rather as a polychromatic thrum you sway and hum along with***

watch two fawns gamboling with a doe, or a swaggering vixen mouth three meadowmice that she has killed to fit them all between her teeth for the trip to her den. Such surplus moments relax us and serve a tonic function—triumphal for the vixen, toning the fawns' reflexes, letting the woodpecker pause unexpectedly to listen for an answer.

The gamboling, like a kitten's stalk, prepares an animal for the hunt or being hunted, and the youngster that enjoys it most may wind up savviest. But the glee I mean is less utilitarian, more spontaneous, and a kind of elixir that needs a bit of peace to germinate. How does one account for the passive, concentrated happiness of listening by a lake to the lap and hiss of rustling water, watching the leaves jiggle, the poplars seethe and simmer. The lake is ribbed with ropes of wind and strands of sun between cloud shadows. The contours of three hills delineate the comely way that brooks feed into its blue bulk, and otters, loons, mergansers, animate it (the far mile curving out of sight), so that you'd hardly need to invent a loch "monster" for drama. And yet you can wake up nearly anywhere and experience a comparably high-pitched serenity. Glee is not complacency—in the middle of a roaring city it may seize you—and I think of it as possibly generated at life's origins, like a filament from, or footprint of, that original *kick*. Nature seems more than Evolution, punctuated or otherwise, and the Creationists may be onto something when they insist that it is an effusion of God's glory. Their god isn't mine, but glee may be a shard of divinity.

Nature, although more inclusive than fundamentalism allows for, seems to me infused with joy. Even the glistering snow is evidence, though

burdensome by March, and October's dying leaves, parched by an internal trigger before the first frosts, turn gratuitously orange, red, and yellow, as beautiful as any plumage—yet what mating purpose does that serve? When outdoors with a dog, anybody can observe the gulping relish with which it quaffs evocative smells, [illegible] hounding on. I have been watching colonies of animals, from chickens, mice, and garter snakes to some of the megafauna, for sixty years, and when they are not under stress you see plenty of [illegible], particularly when young ones are splitting off and diligently getting a new group started. Biochemistry drives hunger and explains why animals consume one another. But what explains the elation, exuberance—this surplus stuff of well-being that animals as well as naturalists feel, and people in Calcutta as much as in New York, or Arunachal Pradesh, for that matter?



Joy sprouts from squalor as well as in the middling classes, a perennial as well as a primitive emotion, as if propelled by a spin originating from the ur- or ultra-density of the Big Bang. Or should we claim that amphibians only acquired a capacity for glee after they became lizards? Or lizards only after they evolved into birds. Where and when did the perception of beauty begin? Most of us nowadays agree that the birds that sing at dawn in the spring are expressing some degree of gladness in their surging notes, not merely a mechanical territoriality. But for a person like me who considers the toads' sparkling, twinned-note, extended song on warm days in May and June to be actually the loveliest of all, the answer is not that easy. I can't swallow the notion that I—but not the toads—find it so lovely. (I also think I've seen and heard alligators and seen turtles enjoy themselves.) However, then the question shifts to whether amphibians that sing, such as frogs and toads, only began to respond to warmth and what we call beauty after they left the constancy of the water and ceased being fish. Not a sure-shot answer there either, unless you discount the evidence of your eyes when you're closely watching fish. And water is an unboxed, undulant medium. What does it mimic when it sloshes

That crucial age when I opened up and trusted myself to nature, back in Connecticut in 1942, is about when most children start perceiving the world beyond themselves [illegible] nuanced, revelatory ways. I later tried sp[illegible] hunting and gave it up, sport climbing and g[illegible] it up, preferring not to lord my ego over wh[illegible] [illegible] those chill, steep rain forests [illegible] Arunachal Pradesh—like Alaska's, multipl[illegible] several times over—with footbridges woven [illegible] vines stretching across the cataracts a[illegible] thatched houses perched on stilts and wh[illegible] peaks suspended above it all. To be immers[illegible] was sufficient, without attempting to "kn[illegible] the bastard off."

If we're not immersed, we're likely to try [illegible] simulate the hubbub of a tribal encampment [illegible] collecting cats or dogs (butchering countl[illegible] horses in order to feed them), or barbecue s[illegible] and fishing tackle, off-road vehicles or quir[illegible] website monikers. We'll fly in bales of gree[illegible] house flowers from low-wage tropical countri[illegible] which are being denuded [illegible] their natural flora, to present [illegible] symbols of we hardly kn[illegible] what. That is, yes, for anniv[illegible] saries, marriages, courtship, h[illegible] idays, graduations: but why *flo[illegible] ers*? Are we bees or bears, or [illegible] they somehow akin to the m[illegible] teries of glee and orgasm a[illegible] why small boys stand by the [illegible] nundrums embedded in t[illegible] mud of a pond, then reach tr[illegible] the bank or roll their pant le[illegible] up and wade after salamande[illegible] water snakes, pollywogs, a[illegible] perhaps a reflection of wh[illegible] have you?

We reach for where we car[illegible] from, our older folk a[illegible] homesick: the nights not bei[illegible] starry anymore and distances not quite real. [illegible] there anything untoward that we don't take[illegible] pill or press a button for? Nature envelops [illegible] nonetheless, in the piquancy of cottage chee[illegible] the giggle of thunder in the next county. O[illegible] lewdness and acquisitiveness bray to pro[illegible] how recidivist we are, still with our feet in t[illegible] primal muck. I live alone at the moment, a[illegible] would smell piquant after a stroke, if I were[illegible] discovered immediately. Nor, when I laugh, [illegible] I feel in the twenty-first century—I could [illegible] Babylonian. And my rapport with friends [illegible] more a refinement of ancient habituatio[illegible] than contemporary. Nature, when abused, m[illegible] react eventually like a tiger whose tail h[illegible] been pulled. We shall see, indeed, if that is t[illegible] case. We will definitively find out. But in t[illegible] meantime we live like those amphibian[illegible] sometimes on the dry beach of modernity a[illegible] sometimes swimming in the oceans that we[illegible] here eternally before.

# THE COUSINS

## By Joyce Carol Oates

ake Worth, Florida
eptember 14, 1998

ear Professor Morgenstern,

low badly I wish that I could address ou as "Freyda"! But I don't have the ght to such familiarity.

I have just read your emoir. I have reason o believe that we are ousins. My maiden ame is "Schwart" (not y father's actual name, think it was changed t Ellis Island in 1936), ut my mother's maiden name was "Morgenstern" and all her family was from Kaufbeuren s yours were. We were o meet in 1941 when ve were small children, ou and your parents nd sister and brother were coming to live with my parents, my wo brothers, and me in Milburn, New ork. But the boat that was carrying ou and other refugees, the Marea, was urned back by U.S. Immigration at New York Harbor.

(In your memoir you speak so briefly of this. You seem to recall a name other than Marea. But I am sure that Marea was the name, for it seemed so beautiful to me like music. You were so young of course. So much would happen afterward, you would not remember this. By my calculation you were 6, and I was 5.)

All these years I had not known that you were living! I had not known that there were survivors in your family. It was told to us by my father that there were not. I am so happy for you and your success. To think that you were living in the U.S. since 1956 is a shock to me. That you were a college student in New York City while I was living (my first marriage, not a happy one) in upstate New York! Forgive me, I did not know of your previous books, though I would be intrigued by "biological anthropology," I think! (I have nothing of your academic education, I'm so ashamed. Not only not college but I did not graduate from high school.)

Well, I am writing in the hope that we might meet. Oh very soon, Freyda! Before it's too late.

I am no longer your 5-year-old cousin dreaming of a new "sister" (as my mother promised) who would sleep with me in my bed and be with me always.

Your "lost" cousin,

*Rebecca*

Lake Worth, Florida
September 15, 1998

Dear Professor Morgenstern,

I wrote to you just the other day. Now I see to my embarrassment that I may have sent the letter to a wrong address. If you are "on sabbatical leave" from the University of Chicago, as it says on the dust jacket of your memoir. I will try again with this, care of your publisher.

I will enclose the same letter. Though I feel it is not adequate, to express what is in my heart.

Your "lost" cousin,

*Rebecca*

P.S. Of course I will come to you, wherever & whenever you wish, Freyda!



*oyce Carol Oates is the author, most recently, of the story collection* I Am No One You Know *(Ecco), which includes two stories originally published in* Harper's Magazine. *Her last story for the magazine, "The Skull," appeared in the May 2002 issue.*

Illustration by Jennifer Renninger

Lake Worth, Florida
October 2, 1998

Dear Professor Morgenstern,

I wrote to you last month but I'm afraid that my letters were misaddressed. I will enclose these letters here, now that I know you are at the "Institute for Advanced Research" at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

It's possible that you have read my letters and were offended by them. I know, I am not a very good writer. I should not have said what I did about the Atlantic crossing in 1941, as if you would not know these facts for yourself. I did not mean to correct you, Professor Morgenstern, regarding the name of the very boat you and your family were on in that nightmare time!

In an interview with you reprinted in the Miami newspaper I was embarrassed to read that you have received so much mail from "relatives" since the memoir. I smiled to read where you said, "Where were all these relatives in America when they were needed?"

Truly we were here, Freyda! In Milburn, New York, on the Erie Canal.

Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

Palo Alto, CA
1 November 1998

Dear Rebecca Schward,

Thank you for your letter and for your response to my memoir. I have been deeply moved by the numerous letters I've received since the publication of Back From the Dead: A Girlhood both in the United States and abroad, and truly wish that I had time to reply to each of these individually and at length.

Sincerely,

*FM*

Freyda Morgenstern
Julius K. Tracey '48 Distinguished Professor of Anthropology,
University of Chicago

Lake Worth, Florida
November 5, 1998

Dear Professor Morgenstern,

I'm very relieved now, I have the correct address! I hope that you will read this letter. I think you must have a secretary who opens your mail and sends back replies. I know, you are amused (annoyed?) by so many now claiming to be relatives of "Freyda Morgenstern." Especially since your television interviews. But I feel very strongly, I am your true cousin. For I was the (only) daughter of Anna Morgenstern. I believe that Anna Morgenstern was the (only) sister of your mother, Sara, a younger sister. For many weeks my mother spoke of her sister, Sara, coming to live with us, your father and your Elzbieta, who was older than you by 3 or 4 years, and your brother, Leon, who was also older than you, not by so much. We had photographs of you. I remember so clearly how your hair was so neatly plaited and how pretty you were, a "frowning girl" my mother said of you, like me. We did look alike then, Freyda, though you were much prettier of course. Elzbieta was blonde with a plump face. Leon was looking happy in the photograph, a sweet-seeming boy of maybe 8. To read that your sister and brother died in such a terrible way in "Theresienstadt" was so sad. My mother never recovered from the shock of that time, I think. She was so hoping to see her sister again. When the Marea was turned back in the harbor, she gave up hope. My father did not allow her to speak German, only English, but she could not speak English well, if anyone came to the house she would hide. She did not speak much afterward to any of us and was often sick. She died in May 1949.

Reading this letter I see that I am giving a wrong emphasis, really! I never think of these long-ago things.

It was seeing your picture in the newspaper, Freyda! My husband was reading the New York Times & called me to him saying wasn't t[h]
strange, here was a woman look[ing]
enough like his wife to be a sist[er]
though in fact you & I do not l[ook]
so much alike, in my opinion, [not]
any longer, but it was a shock to [see]
your face, which is very like [my]
mother's face as I remember it.

And then your name, Freyda M[or]
genstern.

At once I went out & purchas[ed]
Back From the Dead: A Girlhood
have not read any Holocaust me[moi]
oirs out of a dread of what I wou[ld]
learn. Your memoir I read sitting
the car in the parking lot of t[he]
bookstore not knowing the tim[e]
how late it was, until my eyes cou[ld]
not see the pages. I thought, "I
Freyda! It's her! My sister I w[as]
promised." Now I am 62 years o[ld]
and so lonely in this place of retir[ees]
wealthy people who look at me
think that I am one of them.

I am not one to cry. But I wep[t]
on many pages of your memo[ir]
though I know (from your inte[r]
views) you wish not to hear such r[e]
ports from readers & have only co[n]
tempt for "cheap American pity."
know, I would feel the same wa[y]
You are right to feel that way.
Milburn I resented the people wh[o]
felt sorry for me as the "grav[e]
digger's daughter" (my father's em
ployment) more than the othe[rs]
who did not give a damn if th[e]
Schwarts lived or died.

I am enclosing my picture, take[n]
when I was a girl of 16. It is all
have of those years. (I look very d[if]
ferent now, I'm afraid!) How badly
wish I could send you a picture of m[y]
mother, Anna Morgenstern, but
were destroyed in 1949.

Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

Palo Alto, CA
16 November 1998

Dear Rebecca Schwart,

Sorry not to have replied earlier.
think yes it is quite possible that w[e]
are "cousins" but at such a remov[e]
it's really an abstraction, isn't it?

m not traveling much this year,
g to complete a new book be-
my sabbatical ends. I am giving
r "talks" and my book tour is
, thank God. (The venture into
oir was my first and will be my
effort at non-academic writing.
as far too easy, like opening a
.) So I don't quite see how it
ld be feasible for us to meet at
resent time.
hank you for sending your pho-
aph. I am returning it.

erely,

*n*

Worth, Florida
ember 20, 1998

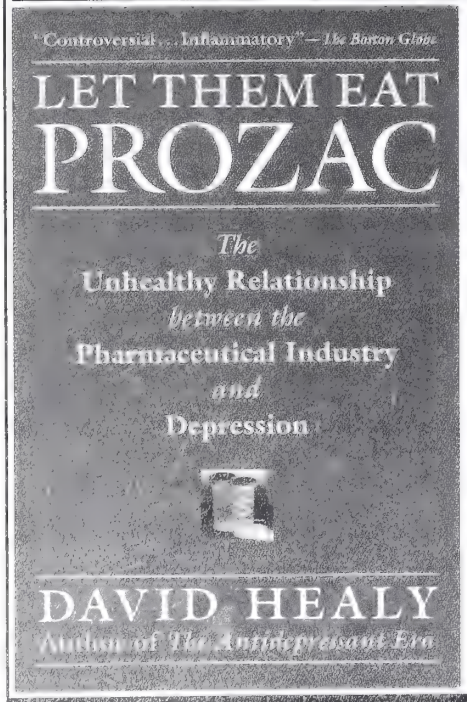
r Freyda,

, I am sure we are "cousins"!
ugh like you I don't know what
sins" can mean.
have no living relatives, I be-
e. My parents have been dead
e 1949 & I know nothing of my
hers, whom I have not glimpsed
any years.
think you despise me as your
erican cousin." I wish you could
ive me for that. I am not sure
"American" I am, though I was
born in Kaufbeuren as you were
in New York Harbor in May
6. (The exact day is lost. There
no birth certificate or it was
.) I mean, I was born on the
igee boat! In a place of terrible
n, I was told.
t was a different time then, 1936.
war had not begun & people of
kind were allowed to "emigrate"
ey had money.
My brothers, Herschel & Augus-
were born in Kaufbeuren & of
rse both our parents. My father
led himself "Jacob Schwart" in
country. (This is a name I have
er spoken to anyone who knows
now. Not to my husband of
rse.) I knew little of my father
ept he had been a printer in the
world (as he called it with scorn)
I at one time a math teacher in a
's' school. Until the Nazis forbade
h people to teach. My mother,





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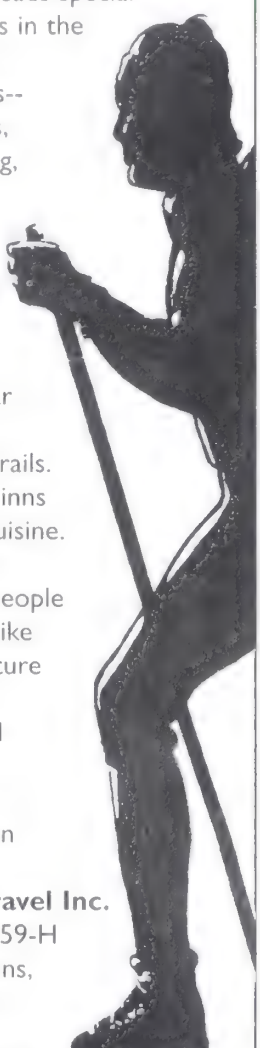
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Anna Morgenstern, was married very young. She played piano very well. We would listen to concerts on the radio sometimes. It's a nice memory. (The radio was Pa's.)

I'm sorry, I don't know if you are interested in any of this. In your memoir you spoke of your mother as a record keeper for the Nazis, one of those Jewish "administrators" helping in the transport of Jews. You are not sentimental about family. There is something so craven to it, isn't there. I respect the wishes of one who wrote Back From the Dead, which is so critical of your relatives & Jews & Jewish history & beliefs as of postwar "amnesia." I would not wish to dissuard you of such a true feeling, Freyda!

I have no true feelings myself, I mean that others can know.

Pa said you were all gone. Like cattle sent back to Hitler, Pa said. I remember his voice lifting, NINE HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX REFUGEES. I am sick still hearing that voice.

Pa said for me to stop thinking about my cousins! They were not coming. They were gone.

Many pages of your memoir I have memorized, Freyda. And your letters to me. In your words, I can hear your voice. I love this voice so like my own. My secret voice I mean, that no one knows.

I will fly to California, Freyda. Will you give me permission? "Only say the word & my soul shall be healed."

Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

Lake Worth, Florida
November 21, 1998

Dear Freyda,

I am so ashamed, I mailed you a letter yesterday with a word misspelled: "dissuade." And I spoke of no living relatives, I meant no one remaining from the Schwart family. (I have a son from my first marriage, he is married with two children.)

I have bought other books of yours: Biology: A History, Race and Racism: A History. How impr[essed] Jacob Schwart would be, the h[istorian] and in the photographs was n[ot a] genius but his sis very far surpas[sed] him!

Will you let me come to see in Palo Alto, Freyda? I could arr[ange] for one day, we might have a n[ice] together & I would depart the n[ext] morning. This is a promise.

Your (lonely) cousin

*Rebecca*

Lake Worth, Florida
November 24, 1998

Dear Freyda,

An evening of your time is too mu[ch] to ask, I think. An hour? An h[our] would not be too much, would Maybe you could talk to me of yo[ur] work, anything in your voice wo[uld] be precious to me. I would not w[ish] to drag you into the cesspool of t[he] past, as you speak of it so strongly woman like yourself capable of su[ch] intellectual work & so highly rega[rd]ed in your field has no time f[or] maudlin sentiment, I agree.

I have been reading your book Underlining & looking up words the dictionary. (I love the dicti[o]nary, it's my friend.) So exciting consider How does science demo[n]strate the genetic basis of behavior

I have enclosed a card here f[or] your reply. Forgive me I did n[ot] think of this earlier.

Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

Palo Alto, CA
24 November 1998

Dear Rebecca Schwart,

Your letters of Nov. 20 & 21 are i[n]teresting. But the name "Jac[ob] Schwart" means nothing to me, I'[m] afraid. There are numerous "Morge[n]sterns" surviving. Perhaps some these are your cousins, too. You mig[ht] seek them out if you are lonely.

s I believe I have explained, th is a very busy time for me. I av much of the day and am not fe ng very sociable in the evening. neliness" is a problem engen- d primarily by the too-close ti imity of others. One excellent re edy is work.

S erely,

*FM*

F I believe you have left phone m sages for me at the Institute. As m assistant has explained to you, I h e no time to answer such calls.

L e Worth, Florida
N vember 27, 1998

D r Freyda,

C letters crossed! We both wrote o Nov. 24, maybe it's a sign.
t was on impulse I telephoned. "If I uld hear her voice"—the thought c e to me.
You have hardened your heart a inst your "American cousin." It w courageous in the memoir to state s learly how you had to harden your h rt against so much, to survive. A ericans believe that suffering m kes saints of us, which is a joke. S ll I realize you have no time for me i your life now. There is no "pur- se" to me.
Even if you won't meet me at t is time, will you allow me to w ite to you? I will accept it if you d not reply. I would only wish that y u might read what I write, it w uld make me so happy (yes, less l nely!), for then I could speak to y u in my thoughts as I did when w were girls.

Y ur cousin,

*Rebecca*

P.S. In your academic writing I o fer so often to "adaptati ecies to environment." I w e, your cousin, in Lake Worth, orida, on the ocean just south of lm Beach, so very far from W rm, N.Y., and from the "old world." u would laugh.

Palo Alto, CA
1 December 1998

Dear Rebecca Schwart,

My tenacious American cousin! I'm afraid it is no sign of anything, not even "coincidence," that our letters were written on the same day and that they "crossed."

This card. I admit I am curious at the choice. It happens this is a card on my study wall. (Did I speak of this in the memoir? I don't think so.) How do you happen to come into possession of this reproduction of Caspar David Friedrich's "Sturzacker"—you have not been to the museum in Hamburg, have you? It's rare that any American even knows the name of this artist much esteemed in Germany.

Sincerely,

*FM*

Lake Worth, Florida
4 December 1998

Dear Freyda,

The postcard of Caspar David Friedrich was given to me, with other cards from the Hamburg museum, by someone who traveled there. (In fact my son, who is a pianist. His name would be known to you, it's nothing like my own.)

I chose a card to reflect your soul. As I perceive it in your words. Maybe it reflects mine also. I wonder what you will think of this new card, which is German also but uglier.

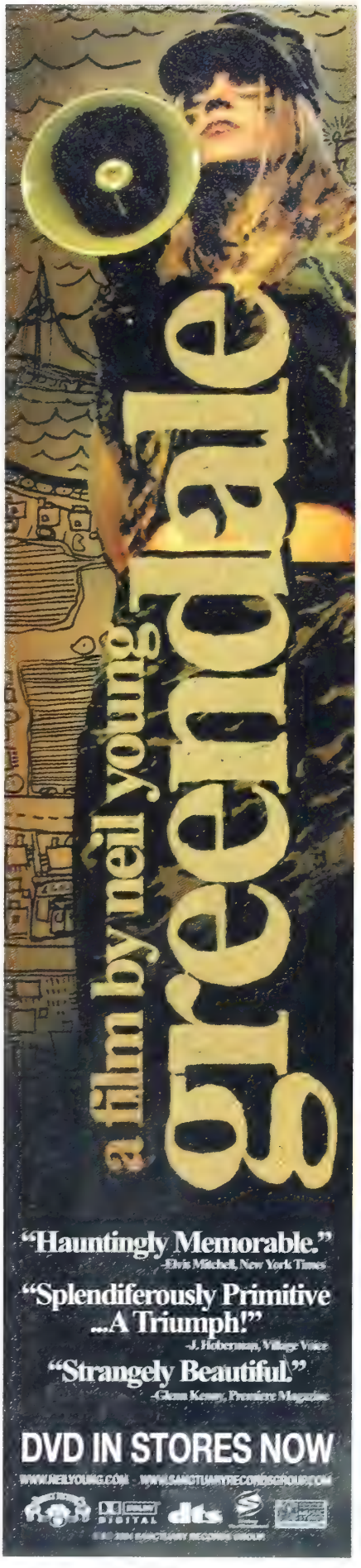
Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

[redacted]
10 December 1998

Dear Rebecca,

[redacted] ugly Nolde. Smoke [redacted] pitch and the Elbe like [redacted] see into my soul, [redacted] that I have wished to [redacted]



THANK YOU but please do not

*FM*

Alto, CA
11 December 1998/2 A.M.

Dear "Cousin"!

Your 16-yr-old photo I made a copy and the jaws so solid. Maybe the eyes were scared, but we know how to hide that, don't we cousin.

In the camp I learned to stand tall. I learned to be big. As animals make themselves bigger, it can be a trick to the eye that comes true. I guess you were a "big" girl, too.

I have always told the truth. I see no reason for subterfuge. I despise fantasizing. I have made enemies "among my kind" you can be sure. When you are "back from the dead" you do not give a damn for others' opinions & believe me, that has cost me in this so-called "profession" where advancement depends upon ass-kissing and its sexual variants not unlike the activities of our kindred primates.

Bad enough my failure to behave as a supplicant female through my career. In the memoir I take a laughing tone speaking of graduate studies at Columbia in the late 1950s. I did not laugh much then. Meeting my enemies who had wished to crush an impious female at the start of her career, not only female but a Jew & a refugee Jew from one of the camps, I looked them in the eye, I never flinched, but they flinched, the bastards. I took my revenge where & when I could. Now these generations are dying out, I am not pious about their memories. At conferences organized to revere them, Freyda Morgenstern is the "savagely witty" truth-teller.

In Germany, where history was so long denied, Back From the Dead has been a bestseller for five months. Already it has been nominated for two major awards. Here is a joke, and a good one, yes?

In this country, no such reception. Maybe you saw the "good" reviews. Maybe you saw the one full-page ad my cheapskate publisher finally ran There have been plenty of attacks. Worse even than the stupid attacks to which I have become accustomed in my "profession."

In Jewish-slanted publications, such shock/dismay/disgust. A Jewish woman who writes so without sentiment of mother & other relatives who "perished" in Theresienstadt. A Jewish woman who speaks so coldly & "scientifically" of her "heritage." As if the so-called Holocaust is a "heritage." As if I have not earned my right to speak the truth as I see it and will continue to speak the truth, for I have no plans to retire from research, writing, teaching & directing doctoral students for a long time. (I will take early retirement at Chicago, these very nice benefits, & set up shop elsewhere.)

This piety of the Holocaust! I laughed, you used that word so reverentially in one of your letters. I never use this word that slides off American tongues now like grease. One of the hatchet-reviewers called Morgenstern a traitor giving solace to the enemy (which enemy? there are many) by simply stating & restating, as I will each time I am asked, that the "holocaust" was an accident in history as all events in history are accidents. There is no purpose to history as to evolution, there is no goal or progress. Evolution is the term given to what is. The pious fantasizers wish to claim that the Nazis' genocidal campaign was a singular event in history, that it has elevated us above history. This is bullshit, I have said so & will continue to say so. There are many genocides, as long as there has been mankind. History is an invention of books. In biological anthropology we note that the wish to perceive "meaning" is one trait of our species among many. But that does not posit "meaning" in the world. If history did exist it is a great river/cesspool into which countless small streams & tributaries flow. In one direction. Unlike sewage it can-

not back up. It cannot be "tested" "demonstrated." It simply is. If individual streams dry up, the ri disappears. There is no "river-c tiny." There are merely accident time. The scientist notes that w out sentiment or regret.

Maybe I will send you these r ings, my tenacious American cou I'm drunk enough, in a festive mo

Your (traitor) cousin

*FM*

Lake Worth, Florida
15 December 1998

Dear Freyda,

How I loved your letter, that ma my hands shake. I have not laugh in so long. I mean, in our spec way.

It's the way of hatred. I love Though it eats you from the ins out. (I guess.)

It's a cold night here, a wind the Atlantic. Florida is often w cold. Lake Worth/Palm Beach a very beautiful & very boring. I w you might come here & visit, y could spend the rest of the wint for it's often sunny of course.

I take your precious letters wi me in the early morning walking the beach. Though I have mem rized your words. Until a year ag would run, run, run for miles! the rain-whipped edge of a hur cane I ran. To see me, my har muscled legs & straight backbon you would never guess I was not young woman.

So strange that we are in our si ties, Freyda! Our baby-girl dolls ha not aged a day.

(Do you hate it, growing old? Yo photographs show such a vigoro woman. You tell yourself, "Every d I live was not meant to be" & there happiness in this.)

Freyda, in our house of mostly gla facing the ocean you would have yo own "wing." We have several cars, yo would have your own car. No que tions asked where you went. You wou not have to meet my husband, yo would be my precious secret.

ell me you will come, Freyda! r the New Year would be a good e. When you finish your work . day we will go walking on the h together. I promise we would have to speak.

r loving cousin,

*Rebecca*

e Worth, Florida
December 1998

r Freyda,

give my letter of the other day, so hy & familiar. Of course you ld not wish to visit a stranger.
must make myself remember: ugh we are cousins, we are ngers.
was reading again Back From Dead. The last section, in erica. Your three marriages—-advised experiments in intima-lunacy." You are very harsh & y funny, Freyda! Unsparing to ers as to yourself.
My first marriage too was blind in e & I suppose "lunacy." Yet with-it, I would not have my son.
n the memoir you have no regret your "misbegotten fetuses" ough for the "pain and humilia-n" of the abortions illegal at the ne. Poor Freyda! In 1957 in a hy room in Manhattan you nearly d to death, at that time I was a ng mother so in love with my . Yet I would have come to you, had known.
Though I know that you will not me here, yet I hold out hope that, ddenly yes you might! To visit, to y as long as you wish. Your priva-would be protected.

emain the tenacious cousin,

*Rebecca*

ke Worth, Florida
ew Year's Day 1999

ear Freyda,

don't hear from you, I wonder if you have gone away? But maybe you will see this. "If Freyda sees this even to toss away . . ."

I am feeling happy & hopeful. You are a scientist & of course you are right to scorn such feelings as "magical" & "primitive," but I think there can be a newness in the New Year. I am hoping this is so.

My father, Jacob Schwart, believed that in animal life the weak are quickly disposed of, we must hide our weakness always. You & I knew that as children. But there is so much more to us than just the animal, we know that, too.

Your loving cousin,

*Rebecca*

Palo Alto, CA
19 January 1999

Rebecca:

Yes I have been away. And I am going away again. What business is it of yours?

I was coming to think you must be an invention of mine. My worst weakness. But here on my windowsill propped up to stare at me is "Rebecca, 1952." The horse-mane hair & hungry eyes.

Cousin, you are so faithful! It makes me tired. I know I should be flattered, few others would wish to pursue "difficult" Professor Morgenstern now I'm an old woman. I toss your letters into a drawer, then in my weakness I open them. Once, rummaging through Dumpster trash I retrieved a letter of yours. Then in my weakness I opened it. You know how I hate weakness!

Cousin, no more.

*F.M*

Lake Worth, Florida
23 January 1999

Dear Freyda,

I know I am sorry.

I shouldn't be so greedy. I have no right. When I first discovered that you were living, last September, my thought was only "My cousin Freyda Morgenstern, my lost sister, she is alive! She doesn't need to love me or even know me or give a thought to me. It's enough to know that she did not perish and has lived her life."

Your loving cousin,

*Rebecca*

Palo Alto, CA
30 January 1999

Dear Rebecca,

We make ourselves ridiculous with emotions at our age, like showing our breasts. Spare us, please!

No more would I wish to meet you than I would wish to meet myself. Why would you imagine I might want a "cousin"—"sister"—at my age? I would like it that I have no living relatives any longer, for there is no obligation to think Is he/she still living?

Anyway, I'm going away. I will be traveling all spring. I hate it here. California suburban boring & without a soul. My "colleagues/friends" are shallow opportunists to whom I appear to be an opportunity.

I hate such words as "perish." Does a fly "perish," do rotting things "perish," does your enemy "perish"? Such exalted speech makes me tired.

Nobody "perished" in the camps. Many "died"—"were killed." That's all.

I wish I could forbid you to revere me. For your own good, dear cousin. I see that I am your weakness, too. Maybe I want to spare you.

If you were a graduate student of mine, though! I would set you right with a swift kick in the rear.

Suddenly there are awards & honors for Freyda Morgenstern. Not only the memoirist but the "distinguished anthropologist" too. So I will travel to receive them. All this comes too late of course. Yet like you I am a greedy person, Rebecca. Sometimes I think my soul is in my gut! I am one who stuffs herself without pleasure, to take food from others.

Spare yourself. No more emotion. No more letters!

*F.M*

Chicago, IL
29 March 1999

Dear Rebecca Schwart,

Have been thinking of you lately. It has been a while since I've heard from you. Unpacking things here & came across your letters & photograph. How stark-eyed we all looked in black-and-white! Like X rays of the soul. My hair was never so thick & splendid as yours, my American cousin.

I think I must have discouraged you. Now, to be frank, I miss you. It has been two months nearly since you wrote. These honors & awards are not so precious if no one cares. If no one hugs you in congratulations. Modesty is beside the point & I have too much pride to boast to strangers.

Of course, I should be pleased with myself: I sent you away. I know, I am a "difficult" woman. I would not like myself for a moment. I would not tolerate myself. I seem to have lost one or two of your letters, I'm not sure how many, vaguely I remember you saying you & your family lived in upstate New York, my parents had arranged to come stay with you? This was in 1941? You provided facts not in my memoir. But I do remember my mother speaking with such love of her younger sister, Anna. Your father changed his name to "Schwart" from—what? He was a math teacher in Kaufbeuren? My father was an esteemed doctor. He had many non-Jewish patients who revered him. As a young man he had served in the German army in the first war, he'd been awarded a Gold Medal for Bravery & it was promised that such a distinction would protect him while other Jews were being transported. My father disappeared so abruptly from our lives, immediately we were transported to that place, for years I believed he must have escaped & was alive somewhere & would contact us. I thought my mother had information she kept from me. She was not quite the Amazon-mother of Back From the Dead . . . Well, enough of this! Though evolutionary anthropology must scour the past relentlessly, human beings are not obliged to do so.

It's a blinding-bright day here in Chicago, from my aerie on the 52nd floor of my grand new apartment building I look out upon the vast inland sea Lake Michigan. Royalties from the memoir have helped me pay for this, a less "controversial" book would not have earned. Nothing more is needed, yes?

Your cousin,

*Freyda*

Lake Worth, Florida
April 3, 1999

Dear Freyda,

Your letter meant much to me. I'm so sorry not to answer sooner. I make no excuses. Seeing this card I thought, "For Freyda!"

Next time I will write more. Soon I promise.

Your cousin,

*Rebecca*

Chicago, IL
22 April 1999

Dear Rebecca,

Rec'd your card. Am not sure what I think of it. Americans are ga-ga for Joseph Cornell as they are for Edward Hopper. What is "Lanner Waltzes"? Two little-girl doll figures riding the crest of a wave & in the background an old-fashioned sailing ship with sails billowing? "Collage"? I hate riddle-art. Art is to see, not to think.

Is something wrong, Rebecca? The tone of your writing is altered, I think. I hope you are not playing coy, to take revenge for my chiding letter of January. I have a doctoral student, a bright young woman not quite so bright as she fancies herself, who plays such games with me at the present time, at her own risk! I hate games, too.

(Unless they are my own.)

Your cousin,

*Freyda*

Chicago, IL
6 May 1999

Dear Cousin:

Yes, I think you must be angry with me! Or you are not well.

I prefer to think that you are angry. That I did insult you in your American soft heart. If so, I am sorry. I have no copies of my letters to you & don't recall what I said. Maybe I was wrong. When I am coldly sober, I am likely to be wrong. When drunk, I am likely to be less wrong.

Enclosed here is a stamped addressed card. You need only check one of the boxes: [ ] angry [ ] not well.

Your cousin,

*Freyda*

P.S. This Joseph Cornell "Pond" reminded me of you, Rebecca. A doll-girl playing her fiddle beside a murky inlet.

Lake Worth, Florida
September 19, 1999

Dear Freyda,

How strong & beautiful you were, at the awards ceremony in Washington. I was there, in the audience at the Folger Library. I made the trip just for you.

All of the writers honored spoke very well. But none so witty & unexpected as "Freyda Morgenstern," who caused quite a stir.

I'm ashamed to say, I could not bring myself to speak to you. I waited in line with so many others for you to sign Back From the Dead &

n my turn came you were begin-
g to tire. You hardly glanced at
you were vexed at the girl assis-
fumbling the book. I did no more
n mumble, "Thank you," & hur-
away.
stayed just one night in Wash-
on, then flew home. I tire easily
, it was a mad thing to do. My
band would have prevented me if
l known where I was headed.
During the speeches you were
less onstage, I saw your eyes wan-
ng. I saw your eyes on me. I was
ng in the third row of the the-
. Such an old, beautiful little
ater in the Folger Library. I think
e must be so much beauty in the
ld we haven't seen. Now it is al-
t too late we yearn for it.
was the gaunt-skull woman with
buzz cut. The heavy dark glasses
ering half my face. Others in my
dition wear gaudy turbans or
aming wigs. Their faces are
vely made up. In Lake Worth/
n Beach there are many of us. I
't mind my baldie head in warm
ather & among strangers, for
ir eyes look through me as if I
invisible. You stared at me at
& then looked quickly away &
erward I could not bring myself
address you. It wasn't the right
e, I had not prepared you for the
ht of me. I shrink from pity &
n sympathy is a burden. I had
known that I would make the
kless trip until that morning, for
much depends upon how I feel
h morning, it's not predictable.
had a present to give to you, I
nged my mind & took away again
ing like a fool. Yet the trip was
derful for me, I saw my cousin so
se! Of course I regret my cow-
ice now it's too late.
You asked about my father. I will
you no more than that I do not
w my father's true name. "Jacob
wart" was what he called himself
so I was "Rebecca Schwart," but
t name was lost long ago. I have
other more fitting American
ne, & I have also my husband's
t name, only to you, my cou-
, am I identified as "Rebecca
wart."
Well, I will tell you one more
ng: in May 1949 my father who




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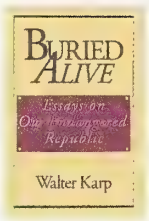
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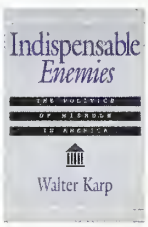
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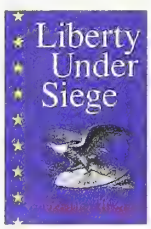

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was the gravedigger murdered your aunt Anna and wished to murder me but failed, he turned the shotgun onto himself & killed himself when I was 13 struggling with him for the gun & my strongest memory of that time was his face in the last seconds & what remained of his face, his skull & brains & [illegible] blood splattered onto me.

I have never told anyone this, Freyda. Please do not speak of it to me, if you write again.

Your cousin

*Rebecca*

(I did not intend to write such an ugly thing, when I began this letter.)

Chicago, IL
23 September 1999

Dear Rebecca,

I'm stunned. That you were so close to me—and didn't speak.

And what you tell me of—. What happened to you at age 13.

I don't know what to say. Except yes I am stunned. I am angry, & hurt. Not at you, I don't think I am angry at you but at myself.

I've tried to call you. There is no "Rebecca Schwart" in the Lake Worth phone directory. Of course, you've told me there is no "Rebecca Schwart." Why in hell have you never told me your married name? Why are you so coy? I hate games, I don't have time for games.

Yes I am angry with you. I am upset & angry you are not well. (You never returned my card. I waited & waited & you did not.)

Can I believe you about "Jacob Schwart"! We conclude that the ugliest things are likely to be true.

In my memoir that isn't so. When I wrote it, 54 yrs later it was a text I composed of words chosen for "effect." Yes there are true facts in Back From the Dead. But facts are not "true" unless explained. My memoir had to compete with other memoirs of its type & so had to be "original." I am accustomed to controversy, I know how to tweak noses. The memoir makes light of the narrator's pain & humiliation. It's true, I did not feel that I would be one of those to die; I was too young, & ignorant, & compared to others I was healthy. My big blonde sister Elzbieta the relatives so admired, looking like a German girl-doll, soon lost all that hair & her bowels turned to bloody suet. Leon died trampled to death, I would learn afterward. What I say of my mother, Sara Morgenstern, is truthful only at the start. She was not a kapo but one hoping to cooperate with the Nazis to help her family (of course) & other Jews. She was a good organizer & much trusted but never so strong as the memoir has her. She did not say those cruel things, I have no memory of anything anyone said to me except orders shouted by authorities. All the quiet spoken words, the very breath of our lives together, was lost. But a memoir must have spoken words, & a memoir must breathe life.

I am so famous now—infamous! In France this month I am a new bestseller. In the U.K. (where they are outspoken anti-Semites, which is refreshing!) my word is naturally doubted yet still the book sells.

Rebecca, I must speak with you. I will enclose my number here. I will wait for a call. Past 10 P.M. of any night is best, I am not so cold-sober & nasty.

Your cousin,

*Freyda*

P.S. Are you taking chemotherapy now? What is the status of your condition? Please answer.

Lake Worth, Florida
October 8

Dear Freyda,

Don't be angry with me, I have wanted to call you. There are reasons I could not but maybe I will be stronger soon & I promise, I will call.

It was important for me to see you, and hear you. I am so proud of you. It hurts me when you say harsh things about yourself, I wish y would not. "Spare us"—yes?

Halt the time I am dreaming very happy. Just now I was smelli snakeroot. Maybe you don't kn what snakeroot is, you have lived ways in cities. Behind the graved ger's stone cottage in Milburn th was a marshy place where this t plant grew. The wildflowers were tall as five feet. They had ma small white flowers that look li frost. Very powdery, with a stran strong smell. The flowers were ali with bees humming so loudly seemed like a living thing. I was membering how waiting for you come from over the ocean I had t dolls—Maggie, who was the pret est doll, for you, and my doll, Mi nie, who was plain & battered bu loved her very much. (My broth Herschel found the dolls at the M burn dump. We found many use things at the dump!) For hours played with Maggie & Minnie you, Freyda. All of us chatteri away. My brothers laughed at n Last night I dreamt of the dolls th were so vivid to me I had n glimpsed in 57 yrs. But it w strange, Freyda, you were not in t dream. I was not, either.

I will write some other time love you.

Your cousin

*Rebecca*

Chicago, IL
12 October

Dear Rebecca,

Now I am angry! You have n called me & you have not given r your telephone number & how ca reach you? I have your street addr but only the name "Rebec Schwart." I am so busy, this is a ter ble time. I feel as if my head is bei broken by a mallet. Oh I am very a gry at you, cousin!

Yet I think I should come to La Worth, to see you.

Should I?

*Fr*

# OUR OWN ANTHRAX

## Dismantling America's weapons of mass destruction

*By Ed Regis*

In February 2003, as the United ates prepared to rid Iraq of its myth- al weapons of mass destruction, it so began the process of dismantling its vn, real biological-weapons plant st a few miles down the road from here I live. Fort Detrick, in ederick, Maryland, is home thirty-eight military and edical-research units, in- uding the 114th Signal Bat- lion, the U.S. Naval Med- al Logistics Command, and e National Cancer Institute, well as some 1,300 officers d enlisted men, about a hun- ed of whom eventually par- cipated in Operation Endur- g Freedom. Until recently, was also the site of Building 70, a seven-story windowless ructure luridly referred to in e local media as the "anthrax wer" or the "tower of doom." etween 1954 and 1965, Army cientists there turned out ore than three tons of the icrobes that cause anthrax, laremia, brucellosis, and oth- r deadly diseases—some of the same pes of pathogens the United States as planning to remove from Iraq.

Like Iraq, the United States had pub- cly forsworn the use of biological eapons many years before, but it had taken some time to remove the final vestiges of the physical infrastructure that manufactured those weapons. Beyond the simple fact of bureaucracy's slow grind, some in the Army perceived that the continued existence of Building 470 and its equipment was a net benefit to the U.S. military, and indeed to the nation. In the event that an American bioweapons program was needed ever again, the building and the complete production line inside it would still be there, able, after a period of repair and refurbishment, to churn out a fresh supply of pathogenic bacteria. And so here we were, invading a country in order to get rid of biological weapons that in fact did not exist while in our own back yard loomed a veritable monument to germ warfare, a fairly magnificent, in-the-flesh biological-weapons plant in all its faded glory, with the whole of its original, lethal germ-weapons production systems still inside it. That it was still standing even as we were scouring Iraq for imaginary bioweapons made the place seem like a prop in a global theater of the absurd.



A few years ago, while researching a book about the American biological-warfare project, I often stopped at the military-green wooden doors of the anthrax tower and stared in through the grimy windows. Inside, I could see a network of pipes, valves, and unidentifiable appliances. On the floor lay detritus that had accumulated over the years: rusting file cabinets, banker's boxes with file folders spilling out of them, reams of copy paper, old furniture, discarded clothing, rubber boots, miscellaneous lab supplies. I had heard the stories about 470 that everyone knew were false but liked to repeat anyway: tales of workers lying dead at their desks, victims of a massive anthrax release; reports of birds flying into the structure and never coming out again. The place

*d Regis is the author of* The Biology of oom: The History of America's Secret erm Warfare Project *and other books*

notograph © David Graham

had been off-limits and untouchable for the last three decades, and during that time it had acquired all the irresistible fascination of forbidden fruit.

Building 470 had been standing unmaintained for so long, though, that it was clear it would either have to be taken down forcibly or would ultimately collapse of its own accord. Early in 2003, therefore, the National Cancer Institute, which had acquired ownership of the place in 1988, slated it for destruction and appropriated funds for an initial phase of dismantling.

Dismantling the complex network of components that made up 470 was not a simple matter. Fort Detrick officials had contemplated various approaches since 1969, when Richard Nixon—arguing that "mankind already carries in its own hands too many of the seeds of its own destruction"—had terminated America's offensive germ-weapons program. Each of the proposals, however, invariably ran up against one or more obstacles. Converting the place into laboratories, for example, would require the disassembly and removal of all the aging germ-warfare machinery that remained within it—bacterial fermenters, centrifuges, seed tanks, settling tanks, biosafety cabinets, air-handling and filtration units, and heating and cooling equipment, as well as the miles of watertight piping through which germ-laden broth once flowed among the various elements of 470 like blood to the major organs. But simply leveling the building to the ground and carting away the pieces had its own complications. When it was constructed in the early 1950s, Building 470 had been conjoined to two smaller structures, Buildings 431 and 469, which, in an excess of irony, would later be converted into cancer-research labs. Since it was surrounded by laboratories, delicate biological experiments, and working scientists, it would not be feasible to tear down the plant with a wrecking ball.

There was an additional barrier: the possibility of dormant anthrax spores getting loose and killing people. The interior of Building 470 had been decontaminated twice, in 1971 and 1972, but the specter of hidden anthrax spores and the thought of potential infection, sickness, and death nevertheless haunted the place. A more serious danger was posed by the presence of asbestos, a carcinogen. The tower had been constructed when asbestos was still touted as the "miracle mineral" of insulation technology, and vast stretches of piping and ductwork, not to mention walls, ceilings, and floors, were wrapped in or filled with the stuff.

Between the asbestos and the anthrax, there could be considerable community opposition to cracking 470 open. The place seemed to radiate invisible death rays and bad karma. As in so many military actions, then, the first step in removing the WMD capacity at Detrick would to build a coa ition, in this made up of the various scientists, ficers, and other employees of F Detrick who would suffer the con quences or enjoy the benefits of contemplated action. Here the N tional Cancer Institute had a plan





held about twenty "public awa ness" meetings on the post, edu tional talks that attempted to al what at first appeared to be wi spread fears of possible anthrax fection, the prospect of airborne d or mold affecting experimental sults, and the like. NCI offici would show up before audiences about a hundred or so and expl how 470 had long since been dec taminated successfully, twice, h during the dismantlement process air-handling system would be set inside the building that would wi draw all air out through HEPA filt to collect and remove any possi contaminants, and so on. They plained how interior surfaces a newly unearthed components wo be regularly swabbed for residual thrax spores—not that the offici themselves expected to find a Plus, before and during the dem tion, NCI would post on its webs a "weekly look-ahead schedule" t described the major upcomi events so that people in the s rounding buildings could menta prepare themselves for whatever in the offing.



Photographs © AP/Wide World Photos (left), and David Graham (ri

he meetings amounted to de-itization clinics, and the in-led message must have sunk in, use after a while the audience ber were far more concerned t the possible loss of their park-spaces to the incoming demoli-crew's trucks and machinery than by nightmare visions of death by anthrax.

Building 470 had long been ed to outsiders, but with a plan lace for its destruction, NCI had ed a final tour of the plant, and n a sunny afternoon just after fall of Baghdad, I donned a hard and, together with a few other nalists, photographers, and vari-Fort Detrick reps, entered the o cavern.

he reality, for once, lived up to ex-ation. The place smelled dank and ty, like a crypt. The interior was ly lit, with naked lightbulbs sus-ded here and there along the cor-rs and in stairwells. On the floor ont of us, small, thin rivulets snaked ween pools of standing water. Paint led back from the walls, exposing e patches of damp white plaster. ted pipes coursed overhead and n angled up and exited through ceiling.

arther on, a vault with its al door hanging open looked a body cooler in a morgue, I halfway expected a refrig-ted shelf to slide out on eaking rollers, revealing a hered corpse. But the object only an autoclave, a sterilizing ice that, when the anthrax tower still churning out hot agents, had n used to disinfect worker clothing. n now a heap of work boots lay de it, roughly thirty mismatched rs of black leather shoes piled up ter-skelter, all of which seemed to e rested there for the past thirty-r years.

n a room off to the side, the build-'s air-cooling and water-chilling chinery resembled the waterworks a submarine. After a bacterial-duction run the system's seed tanks, menters, settling tanks, connecting es, valves, and other so-called cess equipment were routinely ster-ed with live steam, and in order to keep the place's internal temperature at bearable levels, vast amounts of refrigeration had to be supplied when and wherever needed. The compressors, condensers, evaporators, and so on, all of them long since idled, were now an empire of rust.

Above were offices, changing rooms, shower stalls, lockers, and bathrooms. Then, the centrifuge. In a modern biology lab a centrifuge is a small, tidy tabletop appliance, a device that spins a dozen or so tiny vials of liquid for the purpose of separating out their contents according to density. This one could hold six people inside comfortably, and had routinely spun down a thousand gallons of anthrax slurry at a clip, separating the spores from the liquid in which they had grown.

On the third floor were the anthrax fermenters themselves, twin 3,000-gallon tanks in which America's finest biological weapons had once been cultivated en masse. The vessels looked like immense fuel- or water-storage tanks, visible up their entire length as they rose through the industrial steel gratings that functioned as flooring on the two levels above. The fermenters had been opened, top and bottom, for sterilization purposes, and I peered up through the dark and yawning interior of one of them, a space where, in times past, uncountable anthrax bacteria had divided and multiplied.

CONTRARY TO MYTH, NOBODY EVER DIED IN BUILDING 470, BUT A MAJOR ANTHRAX SPILL HAD IN FACT OCCURRED THERE, IN 1958

Contrary to myth, nobody ever died in Building 470, but a major anthrax spill had in fact occurred. At the end of a production run in 1958, a valve blockage prevented the spore-laden mother liquor from leaving the fermenter in room 301 on the south side of the building and flowing into a holding tank. In an attempt to clear the jam, a worker loosened the four corner bolts that held the two valve plates together and inserted a flathead screwdriver between them. Instead of clearing the blockage, the worker popped the valve open, sending a spray of pressurized anthrax slurry across the room. But the building had been designed so that any accidents could be confined to the area in which they occurred, and in this case a four-inch-high concrete spill curb ran around the room's perimeter and across the doorway, creating a catch basin. The anthrax broth coursed down an open drain and into kill tanks in the basement, where it was steam sterilized and rendered harmless. The worker, who had been immunized against the disease, never got sick.

We climbed through the building's upper stories, to the mechanical equipment room on the seventh floor, where large cylindrical fans had pumped air through stacks of filters. The supply fans were connected to the exhaust fans in such a way that the building's interior was maintained at one to two inches negative pressure relative to the outside.

At last we emerged out onto the roof. It was a brilliant, bright, sunlit day, and you could see for miles in every direction. Nearby was the so-called 8-Ball, the one-million-liter test sphere in which, during the prime of the American biological-warfare program, Army scientists tested the pathogens produced in 470 and the other labs on a variety of animal species ranging from mice to guinea pigs, rabbits to donkeys, and even occasionally on human volunteers. The 8-Ball was now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Farther away but still clearly visible were the Detrick Plaza Apartments, the former residence of Steven J. Hatfill, the F.B.I.'s famed "person of interest" in connection with the anthrax letter attacks of September and October 2001. In November 2002 five F.B.I. agents had presented themselves at NCI's Fort Detrick offices demanding entry to Building 470. They rummaged around the place for hours, looking for ways that fresh anthrax could have been made there, by Hatfill himself or someone else. They took lots of photographs, left, and never came back.

On April 19, a few days after my initial inspection of Building 470, the first of two suspected germ-

weapons laboratories, both of them mobile trailers, were discovered near the town of Tall Kayf in northern Iraq. The other was found at the al Kindi rocket and missile research facility near Mosul, on May 9. It was not unheard of for trailers to be used for bioweapons production, and during its own twenty-six-year-long offensive program, the United States had developed plans for outfitting a semitrailer with the necessary bacterial growth equipment to produce enough anthrax to kill everyone in a large city.*

The Bush Administration had high hopes for the Iraqi trailers, and on a visit to the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland in late May, Bush himself, referring to them, said, "We found the weapons of mass destruction." In fact the trailers had been used to maintain weather balloons.

By the time the trailers had been discovered, the first phase of Building 470's dismantlement—asbestos removal—had already been completed. The contract for "asbestos abatement," as it was known in the trade, had been awarded to LVI Environmental Services, a New York–based firm with local offices in Gaithersburg, Maryland, whose primary business since 1986 was the removal, containment, and proper disposal of asbestos. Clad in space suits and breathing through respirators, a small crew of mostly foreign day laborers entered the building and, starting with the penthouse on the seventh-floor roof and working downward floor by floor, ripped asbestos insulation from around pipes, pulled it down from ceilings and walls, and stuffed it into black plastic bags. Many of the workers spoke no English and had no idea what had taken place in the building's dim past. "We offered to talk to them about it," said Carol Shemet, the senior project manager overseeing the dismantlement, "but their company asked us not to."

The structure itself would perish in two separate waves of destruction that would proceed in opposite directions and meet in the middle, with the interior being removed from the bottom up and the exterior taken away bit by bit from the top down. The general idea was to open a shaft inside the building that would act as a funnel for the progressive removal of everything else. The structure and its contents would gradually come down inside itself, as if the building were a shirtsleeve turning inside out.

"I'M GOING TO MAKE THAT BUILDING DISAPPEAR SILENTLY, JUST LIKE DAVID COPPERFIELD DISAPPEARED THE STATUE OF LIBERTY"

The detailed plans for doing all this, in what precise order and with what machinery, were the work of Controlled Demolition, Inc. The company's president, Mark Loizeaux, had endeared himself to the Fort Detrick power structure with his approach to the matter of minimizing noise and vibration levels during the demolition process. One of the ideas he employed was to install geophones—seismographic sensing devices—in the offices of scientists working in the adjacent buildings (469 and 431) and setting up an alarm system that would alert workers when noise levels approached the excessive. After he'd established a never-exceed baseline level of uproar, yellow lights would start flashing at 60 percent of that point and red lights meant workers should stop work entirely. The lights would be stationed where the laborers were, and any flashing was to be regarded as a signal to reduce their levels of jackhammering, drilling, or cutting. Exceptionally loud operations would be relegated to the early hours of the morning, or to weekends, when few scientists were at work. That way, the inevitable physical violence of destruction would never reach levels that would intrude upon the scientists or upset their experiments.

It was Loizeaux's intention, in fact, to dismantle Building 470 with a technique so minimalist in character that it bordered on the occult. "I'm going to put a black mesh shroud around it," he told me, "and I'm going to make that building disappear silently, just like David Copperfield disappeared the Statue of Liberty."

A few weeks after George W. Bush declared an end to "major combat operations" in Iraq, a crew of seven CDI demolition experts advanced through the ground-level double doors on 470's south side and proceeded to smash, dismember, and then extract the pieces of the antiquated chilling machinery. Dressed in cotton flame-retardant uniforms worn over street clothes and breathing through half-face respirators with chemical cartridges in them, the men looked like space invaders entering a biohazard area. The respirators, however, were not so much for any potential anthrax hazard as for filtering out lead particles, since the men would be cutting through a series of lead welds with torches.

Ripping out the building's first-floor cooling equipment took the wrecking crew roughly half a day. The men cut up the machinery, piping, and tanks with torches, and then used the grapple bucket of a Caterpillar skid loader to lift the pieces into a roll-off box—a large open Dumpster-like container that could be rolled off and onto the backs of trucks. The main reason for cutting up the metal, other than for fitting the pieces into the roll-offs, was to prevent any of the items from ever being used again for their original purpose, which was to make germ weapons. In fact, CDI would take extraordinary measures to keep tabs on every last piece of metal from the time it left 470 until it was smelted down into its elemental components.

Once a roll-off box was filled with metal it was taken first to a laydown area, a designated space inside a fenced lot a short distance away

* *The* New York Times *later reported that in September 2001, while he was still working at Fort Detrick, Steven Hatfill had supervised the construction of a mock germ warfare trailer to be used for training purposes by bioweapons inspectors. The trailer's equipment included a bacterial fermenter and a centrifuge, but according to an Army spokesman these were not hooked up. "None of this equipment is functional," the spokesman said. "It looks like it is—the real stuff, but it's nonfunctional."*

n the building. Standard proce-
e was to have a technician come
from the Southern Research In-
ute, a private laboratory engaged
chemical- and biological-defense
earch, located nearby, and swab
dom pieces for residual anthrax
ores that somehow might have
vived the decontamination
ocess. Only after the items in
estion were cleared would the
l-off be transported to Conservit,
crap-metal dealer about twenty
les off base.

Workers at Conservit put the
tal through a shredder and then
red the output in their own sepa-
e lay-down yard that they had cre-
d and reserved specifically for the
ilding 470 project. Finally they
ded the shredded metal into con-
ners, which they put onto railcars
aded for the smelters, either
eorgetown Steel, in South Caroli-

paperwork surrounds every element of the U.S. biowarfare trade.

The rest of the ground-floor interior stripout took the better part of a week, as the CDI destruction crew broke up and removed fermenters, seed tanks, starter tanks, autoclaves, and the freeze-drying units that had turned the bacterial slurry into a powder. Building 470 had been a gravity-flow plant: the germ growth process started on the sixth floor and ended at ground level. Biological agents, starter cultures, and liquid-growth media arrived at the plant in 55-gallon drums that were hoisted to the sixth floor in the freight elevator, their contents poured into the seed tanks and then mixed with starter pathogens, sugars, and other biochemical herbs and spices. After being transferred to ever larger growth tanks, the pathogen slurry ended up in either one of the two









a, or Nucor Steel, in Tunis, North
arolina. When the items had been
nelted, CDI received an official no-
fication. As in Iraq, a great deal of

3,000-gallon fermenters. If the agent in question was anthrax, the liquid as it emerged from the fermenter would have a brownish appearance and the consistency of skim milk. After fermentation the slurry went into a holding tank and then finally to the centrifuge. A typical anthrax production run was five days long—a normal workweek—and yielded seven kilograms (about fifteen pounds) of dried anthrax powder. During its two decades of operation, Building 470's large fermenters completed 453 runs, producing almost three and a half tons of anthrax.

All of that old germ-warfare machinery would now have to be systematically removed from the building and destroyed. To create an open chute that extended from the upper floors to ground level, the wrecking crew dismantled the building's elevator car and removed it from the elevator shaft. Smaller items on the second floor such as autoclaves, ductwork, piping, miscellaneous tanks, cabinets, tables, and lab benches would be lowered down through the elevator shaft.

The centrifuge was too big and bulky for such treatment, however. The men removed a non-load-bearing wall beside it that separated the centrifuge from the steel-grating floor on the other side, cut a hole through the steel grating, and lowered the centrifuge in one piece to the first floor, where they cut it up with Broco torches.

The Brocos were undeniably awesome. Working at temperatures exceeding 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit and resembling handheld Roman candles, Broco "ultrathermic cutting rods" literally liquefied anything in their path, using the material itself as fuel. Once it is fired up, a Broco cutting rod is capable of melting almost any material, natural or artificial, including cast iron, steel, stainless steel, concrete, granite, nickel, titanium and aluminum, plus more exotic metals and even special-purpose heat-resistant items such as the thermal tiles of the space shuttle. Even the centrifuge, which had a stainless-steel lining, was no match for the Brocos, and soon the object had been cut up into manageable sections that were then loaded into a roll-off. By the time CDI's wreckers were in full swing they could load a container in twenty minutes.

The CDI demolition crew, which by now numbered thirteen to four-

notographs © David Graham

teen, worked its way up through the interior of Building 470, pushing down walls, cutting up bacterial-cultivation appliances and the remaining components of the bioweapons production line. The seed tanks, blow tanks, miles of piping, hundreds of valves, gauges, connections, glove boxes, hood lines, filtration panels, fans, motors, hoists, chains, pulleys, airlock doors, ventilation ducts, air diffusers, laboratory instruments, acid-bath tubs, incubators, heaters, refrigerators, freezers, flask shakers, sterilizers, lighting fixtures, wiring, ladders, stairwells—all of these and more were cut up into sections, lowered quietly to the bottom, put into containers, and hauled away.

Finally the crew reached the anthrax fermenters themselves, 40-foot-long tanks weighing 25,300 pounds apiece, their inside walls lined with two concentric layers of carbon steel and stainless steel. But for all their noxious history, to the CDI's band of destroyers the fermenters were essentially just two more inert objects to be broken up and disposed of. They were easily felled by the Broco torches, carved into six-foot slabs that were then lowered to the ground floor, loaded into containers, and transported out.

There were no surprises at any point—except for the whiskey bottles. One day as a wall came down, lo and behold, a brown whiskey bottle appeared in the rubble. More bottles soon turned up: Schenley, Seagram's, pints, half-pints, little nips—perhaps fifty of them altogether, left behind years earlier by the workers who had built the place.

In Iraq, meanwhile, two of the country's top germ-weapons scientists, Huda Ammash ("Mrs. Anthrax") and Rihab Taha ("Dr. Germ"), had been taken into custody by the American forces. Both of them, along with other Iraqi scientists, steadfastly continued to deny that the country possessed any stocks of germ weapons. President Bush, nevertheless, claimed that the weapons of mass destruction were still there to be found. "It's going to take a while," Bush said. He assigned David Kay, a former U.N. weapons inspector, the task of seeking them out.

The final dissolution of Building 470 would proceed in tandem with the weapons search in Iraq. Whereas the interior stripout had gone from the bottom up, demolishing the exterior would progress from the roof down, with the starring role in the enterprise played by the Brokk 250, a remote-controlled hydraulic hammer. The Brokk looked like a lunar-landing module with an articulated arm for soil sampling. In fact the machine was a remotely operated demolition robot, a controlled berserker, for use in physically precarious situations. Not only did the Brokk spare workers the vibration and noise associated with conventional handheld jackhammers; it also protected them from flying debris, dust, and splinters—not to mention collapsing walls, beams, and ceilings. The human operator would direct the machine's performance by means of a remote control, essentially a couple of joysticks plus a row of buttons, from a vantage point a safe distance away. In addition, the machine could be hoisted by crane to the most physically exposed positions and then lifted out again when its work was done. In a building that was to be razed from the inside, taken down floor by floor within its own shell, the Brokk would be an indispensable tool.

Weighing 6,750 pounds, the Brokk 250 was as heavy as a fully loaded SUV, and the challenge was getting it to the rooftop in one piece. Since the machine was too big to hoist through the interior, which was in any case still largely partitioned into separate floors, and since there was no smooth surface that went from floor to floor, the only way to get it up was by means of a crane.

On Saturday, August 29, workers from AmQuip, based in Baltimore, transported a 110-ton heavy-lift crane to Fort Detrick. The crane lifted the Brokk off the ground, raised it a distance of 100 feet, deposited it on the roof, and then departed. The crane would be brought back again each time the Brokk was ready to be moved down a floor, a total of nine visits, at the cost of $1,500 each including the operator.

By the time the Brokk had arrived on the rooftop, the last of the interior machinery—the immense "hamster wheel" cylindrical fans and the associated air-filtration panels on the seventh floor—had been removed from the bottom and carted away. At this point, the building was virtually an empty shell, an open network of beams, girders, concrete floors, and decaying plaster walls, all of it surrounded by a layer of gray cinder blocks and red bricks. Top-down destruction would now be a matter of pulling down the walls, breaking through the concrete-slab flooring and pushing the rubble down through the nearest available open shaft.

Repeatedly, the Brokk motored forward on its wheels until it reached a wall. It planted its four feet securely around itself and then lowered its hydraulic hammer to the concrete slab and started pounding, in front of it and to the sides. The flooring crumbled and fell away. The Brokk backed up and then did it all again, seriatim, until finally it was stranded on its own private concrete footprint, as if suspended in mid-air. At this point the AmQuip crane arrived, lifted the Brokk from where it ended up, and then lowered it through the space it had created to the next floor below.

As the days went by, the entire structure seemed to diminish and disappear, exactly as Mark Loizeaux had said it would. On the rare occasion when the office geophones tripped the alarm system, the fault could usually be traced back to an event in the laboratory, such as a lab worker accidentally kicking a desk or dropping a phone book.

On October 2, David Kay gave an interim report of his findings before House and Senate intelligence committees. Although he had directed a team of 1,200 people who had searched Iraq for three months, they had not managed to find any biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons. Still, he was hopeful. "We're not foreclosing any files or any possibili-

he said. "We're still at work." y spokesmen continued to insist, ey had from the beginning, that all Iraq was "a large place."

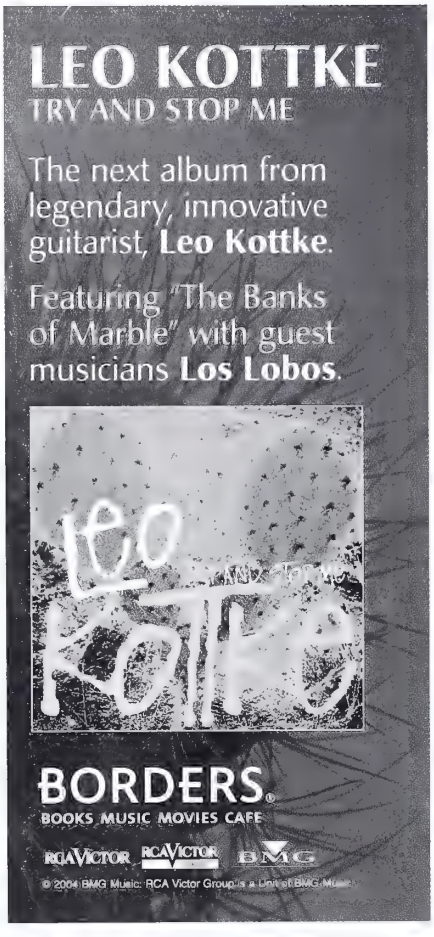
October 13, Building 470 had reduced to roughly half of its nal height. At that juncture, the rooftop penthouse gone and ıpper four stories having been en up and lowered down ıgh the ever emptier shell that ined, CDI had sent 119 roll-off ainers to the county landfill and ontainers to Conservit, the met-cyclers. Total weight removed to date was 3,513,250 pounds.

ıe demolition work continued ıe next six weeks.

nally, by early December 2003, ding 470 no longer existed. h-moving machinery backfilled building's footprint with sand, and crushed stone; compacted mass; graded it level with the ounding ground; and tested the ting surface for stability. Work-ebuilt and refaced the exterior s of the two buildings that had ked 470, finishing them off with ık stucco facade that lent them a ewhat southwestern look. Others ned up the alleys that led to the c site. The Brokk, the Caterpil- and related equipment were ed onto trucks and carted away.

n December 13, Saddam Hus-ı, despite being considerably ller than a biological-weapons ory, was found at the bottom of rt hole, in a kind of living grave, r his hometown of Tikrit in thern Iraq. Even at that late e, some nine months after the t of the war, neither Iraq's fabled logical-weapons production ıts nor the weapons themselves turned up anywhere. The fol-ing January, David Kay, still un- to find the lethal implements, gned from his post. And at Fort rick, after a small army of ex-ts equipped with the most ad-ced destructive technologies on planet had spent the better part ı year on the project, America's anthrax factory was replaced by arking lot. In their ability to pro-e germ weapons on demand, the ited States and Iraq had finally ieved parity. ■






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SOLUTION TO THE JUNE PUZZLE

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NOTES FOR "SIXES AND SEVENS":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 11. (f)olio; 12. rum-ba(ck); 16. kinder-gar-net(rev.); 23. *; 28. ov(u)le*; 29. e'er-Y.

DOWN: 2. a-N-U.S.; 4. *; 6. ex-clam-ations*; 7. a-LE(D)-rt; 9. do-yen; 23. (hou)r-ate-D; 24. *; 26. two mngs.

SIX-LETTER WORDS: a) Dr(ess)y; b) frolic (hidden in reverse); c) ideals*; d) PE-tar-d.; e) sta-tic; f) as-sets; g) tar(if)-F(rev); h) b(all's)y; i) itself*; j) P(h-leg)M; k) elders, two meanings; l) s(can't)-y.

SEVEN-LETTER WORDS: a) tang-ram; b) re-minds, pun; c) c-lo-sure; d) rimles*-S; e) unearth*; f. S(Y-stem[rev.])S.; g) tidying*; h) tur(n)key; i) alc(hem)y*; j) leerier, hidden.

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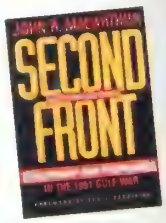

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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## LOOD FOR OIL

***only justification that makes e***

We have occupied Iraq for more than a year now, in a campaign that has killed usands of Iraqis and more than t hundred Americans. The oc- ation has cost at least $187 bil- ., riven the NATO alliance, provided the enemies of civi- tion an unprecedented locus of evolent energy. Most of the ld protested the invasion, few ıis support the occupation, and n Americans are beginning to ıbt their nation's course. Yet all the great expense of this , it is decreasingly clear what it meant to achieve.

As the promised "regime change" congealed into reality, its pub- purpose has become fluid, un- spable. When one objective has ved nonsensical or politically xpedient, another has emerged n the CNN ether to replace it. Sec- ary of State Colin Powell informed United Nations that war was the y means by which that institution's dibility could be maintained. Yet en the Security Council declined endorse this position, its opinion s dismissed as irrelevant. George sh told Americans that Iraq was a ave and gathering threat" not just to Middle East but to the homeland it- . Yet when we discovered that Sad- n Hussein had no anthrax and no unmanned aerial vehicles with which to deliver it, the President, together with a crowd of enthusiastic nation builders from across the political spectrum, changed the subject to "freedom." Now even sovereignty, which is the essence of freedom, is no longer an objective in any meaningful sense, as Powell made clear in April when he said that "we are giving sovereignty so that sovereignty can be used to say, 'We invite you to remain.'"



Given such locutions, one can forgive conspiracists for understanding the occupation in darker terms. We hear that Halliburton is behind it all. That the big oil companies think they can somehow make more money in Iraq under a U.S. occupation than they did under a Baathist kleptocracy. That the invasion was designed to prop up Israel. And yet these theories, too, make little sense. It seems unlikely that U.S. oil companies would prefer an unruly Islamic democracy, let alone a war zone, to a stable authoritarian regime. Halliburton's stock price, though up since the start of the war, is still at just over half its historic high in 2000. As for Israel, it's hard to fathom the administration spending hundreds of billions of dollars to aid that troubled state purely out of personal or even eschatological conviction.

As justification after justification has fallen away, nothing of any real value to Americans remains in Iraq besides the oil itself, nearly a ninth of the world's proven reserves. Without that oil, all that remains is a terrifying landscape of sand and soldiers with nothing to fight for but their own existence. Although our desire for Iraqi oil may seem a distasteful explanation for war, it is the only explanation by which we may continue to believe that we live in a rational universe. Put another way: if this war is *not* about oil, then truly we stand poised at the abyss.

Oil is perhaps the only justification for the war that the administration has consistently refused to avow, as in June 2003 when Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz reminded reporters that "the notion that the war was ever about oil is a complete piece of nonsense," or when Donald Rumsfeld explained to the Hoover Institution in February 2003 that the approaching war "does not

rations by Christopher Sena

relate to oil. I mean, it just plain doesn't." And yet there is [illegible] to hope that here, again, the administration is [illegible] percent of the world's oil and produce only 8 percent of it. Changing that ratio would require radically reinventing the U.S. economy, an option no president has ever presented to his people. Maintaining that ratio, on the other hand, not only keeps the economy growing; it keeps Americans happy. This may not be the best part of what democracy is about, but neither is it an undemocratic goal. "Oil, enough oil, within our certain grasp seemed ardently necessary to greatness and independence in the twentieth century," wrote the economist Herbert Feis in 1946, when it was becoming clear that the United States would soon be unable to produce from within its own borders all the oil it required. Ever since then, the story of the Middle East has been the story of one president after another attempting to maintain that "certain grasp."

One might hope that the market could sort out our ability to purchase oil, but, in fact, the sheer physicality of the business—all those vulnerable oil fields and pipelines and storage tanks in hostile neighborhoods—combined with our absolute dependence on the product means that the flow of oil is determined as much by political action as by market forces. This was the lesson of the 1973 Arab oil embargo, which not only traumatized the American economy and introduced the phrase "the oil weapon" into the nightmares of American politicians but also saw Iraq nationalizing Exxon's and Mobil's shares in the Basrah Petroleum Company and plans being made in the White House for an invasion of Saudi Arabia. Henry Kissinger described the proper balance of market forces and military forces to *BusinessWeek* just after the embargo was lifted. "It is one thing to use it in the case of a dispute over price," he said of military force. "It's another where there's some actual strangulation of the industrialized world." Business [illegible] enough. As Feis wrote presciently, "American interests must have actual physical control of, or at the very least assured access to, adequate and properly located source of supply."

[illegible] preferred method of assuring access to Gulf oil has been to "guarantee the sovereignty" of some oil-producing nation, thereby allowing us to treat any threat to the oil system as a threat to a state, which provides a useful political framework for our financial transactions. The history of American client states is well known. Harry Truman promised King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia—the largest producer of oil on earth then and now—that no threat to its sovereignty "could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States." Dwight Eisenhower expanded the pledge. "Our country supports without reservation the full sovereignty and independence of each and every nation of the Middle East," he said, and would back it with the full force of the U.S. military.

Jimmy Carter was more forthright about our interest in the region. After noting, in his final State of the Union address, "the overwhelming dependence of the Western democracies on oil supplies from the Middle East," he put forth what is now called the Carter Doctrine: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force."

The Carter Doctrine is nonpartisan, and although the whole enterprise of premising U.S. security on access to foreign oil may be unwise, within the context of that goal it has been highly effective. It is our current President's father, in fact, who most famously acted upon that doctrine, when Saddam Hussein moved from "friend" to dangerous aggressor by invading Kuwait, which itself possesses a tenth of the world's proven reserves. Dick Cheney, then the secretary of defense, was able to sum up the situation quite clearly just aft[er] that brief and successful war. Sad[dam] "was clearly in a position to dic[tate] the future of worldwide ener[gy] policy, and that gave him a strangl[e] hold on our economy and on that o[f] most other nations of the world [as] well." We stopped him, and the o[il] flowed for another decade, amon[g] the most prosperous in U.S. history.

If we view the current occupatio[n] through the lens of fifty years o[f] U.S. policy, we can begin to con[-] struct a rationale for war that is no[t] charming but at least has the benefit o[f] coherence. Our best client state, Sau[-] di Arabia, is in danger of collapsin[g] under the weight of a thousand fa[t-] tened princes, and our friendship i[s] further troubled by the fact that fi[f-] teen of its citizens killed nearly 3,00[0] of ours. Moreover, as is clear from th[e] previous writings of Cheney and Rums[-] feld, this administration sees China, Russia, and the European Union a[s] potential superpower rivals on the or[-] der of the old Soviet Union. The thre[e] of them together have oil contract[s] pending in Iraq worth as much as $1 [-] trillion. Those contracts will go into ef[-] fect the moment the U.N. lifts its sanc[-] tions regime, giving our rivals un[-] precedented control over our economi[c] health. What would seem to most ob[-] servers to be a series of positive devel[-] opments—the normalization of Iraq[i] politics, the privatization of the Iraq[i] oil business, the imminent collapse o[f] a corrupt Saudi regime—is instead see[n] as a distinct threat to our "certai[n] grasp" on the oil so vital to our "great[-] ness and independence." And so w[e] must invade Iraq in order to ensur[e] continued U.S. control over the flow[s] of Middle East oil.

Although it would be unfair to as[-] cribe such a provocative move to th[e] doctrine of Jimmy Carter, the inva[-] sion of a territory in order to contro[l] its natural resources is a rational, al[-] beit morally questionable, exercis[e] with successful historical precedent[s] (the founding of the United States, for example). And yet the current administration finds itself incapable of making its case. If indeed this wa[r]

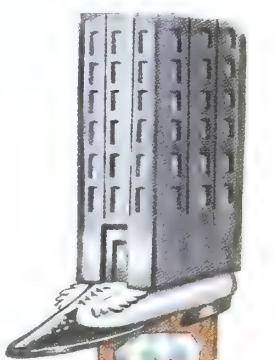
out oil, though, then in many the most dangerous thing we l do is insist that it is not. As y Colonel Paul Hughes, who the first director of strategic ning for the Iraq war, told the *ington Post* in May, "Unless we re that we have coherency in olicy, we will lose strategically." on we will be at war with Iraq o other reason than that the le there are shooting at our sol- Unwinnable wars are inevitably t themselves. It is not giving Bush enefit of the doubt, then, to as- his war is not about oil. It is giv- im the benefit of the doubt to ne it is.

—*Luke Mitchell*

## ONOMY OF ALE

***ident Bush has been no friend all business***

n Republican rhetoric of recent years, small-business owners have been portrayed not merely as val- constituents or y supporters but as g embodiments, it ld seem, of the y and its priorities. of the center- es of Bush's re- tion campaign is a es of "conversa- s" with small busi- es—staged events hich he interacts handpicked en- reneurs. At one conversation in ch, while chatting a stock-car man- turer in Bakers- l, California, in front of signs read- STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY, President argued that his policies, uding his massive tax cuts, had yed the fortunes of the small- ness owner. "A lot of people are ing confident and optimistic about future," Bush boasted. In the 2000 election the G.O.P. exalted the small-business owner in a similar fashion, and the rhetorical attention seemed to pay dividends: two thirds of the campaign contributions made by Americans who identified themselves as small-business owners went to the Republican Party; and Republicans received nearly three quarters of the contributions from the small-business community's political-action committees.



In practice, however, Bush's presidency has been catastrophic for small-business owners. Initiatives ostensibly directed at small companies—those with fewer than 500 employees, which together employ more than half of the private-sector workforce—have had little of the promised effect. Bush has gutted the only federal agency, the Small Business Administration (SBA), whose mandate is to help small companies. At the same time, federal aid to small businesses has been denied, even as the administration, notoriously disdainful of big government, has shamelessly subsidized large corporations—not coincidentally, the main contributors to the President.

As President Bush shepherded his two tax cuts, passed in 2001 and 2003, through Congress, he promoted them as boons for small business. The 2003 cut would, according to the White House, repay 23 million small-business owners an average of $2,000. But for this computation to work, Bush's accountants had to expand their definition of "small-business owner" to include individuals in the top tax bracket who made a portion of their income from their investments in small companies. In reality, only 20 percent of small-business tax filers will receive this amount; half will receive less than $500, and nearly a quarter will receive nothing at all. Only 2 percent of small-business owners will benefit from the 2003 reduction for the top tax bracket, which receives more than 30 percent of the total payout. This is a well-tested course for the administration, which in 2001 also paraded its reduction in top-bracket obligations—from 39.6 to 33 percent—as a windfall for small-business owners, when only 1 percent of small-business tax filers earn more than $310,000 annually, the minimum for the top tax bracket. Joel Marks, executive director of the American Small Business Alliance, a small, nonpartisan trade group, notes that although many small companies are infuriated by the farce of tax relief, their complaints have no currency in Washington: within his first months in office, Bush removed the head of the SBA from Cabinet meetings.

Other of Bush's domestic initiatives have had damaging fallout for small-business owners. In 2003 the White House eliminated the tax on corporate dividends, a move that will benefit wealthy, corporate stockholders but will do considerable harm to small companies: higher dividends on stocks will lure investors away from private businesses, whose profit distributions are still subject to taxes. The very Treasury study that the Bush Administration cited to support its dividend proposal acknowledged that ending dividend taxation would result in "the reallocation of physical capital . . . from the rest of the economy [i.e., small business] into the corporate sector."

The administration's health-insurance reform for small companies, meanwhile—a proposal to allow businesses to pool resources and buy insurance through trade organizations—is a thinly disguised favor to Big Insurance. Although Bush has promoted the plan as a way to help small companies lower health-care costs, a provision in the law would allow insurers to evade state caps on premium increases, thereby boosting costs for small firms. A 2003 study by Mercer Risk, Finance and Insurance found that the proposal would likely raise premiums for a majority of small-business owners.

ments that the administration claims are crucial to opening markets for small companies. Less publicized has been the [illegible] of funding for U.S. Export Assistance Centers, an SBA program that helps smaller companies operate abroad. In [illegible] steel companies in spring 2002 and imposed tariffs on foreign steel, a decision that devastated small manufacturers who relied upon steel imports and ultimately cost them 200,000 jobs. The tariffs were eventually repealed, but only in the face of $2.2 billion in retaliatory sanctions threatened by the European Union.

Bush's ongoing wars have resulted in an enormous increase in federal contracting, as defense and homeland-security spending has skyrocketed. Prompted by encouragement from the administration, small companies have eagerly sought a share in this bonanza, now worth more than $200 billion. They have been sorely disappointed. Whereas spending on government contracts rose by 7 percent between 2001 and 2002, the number of contracts given to small companies during that period fell by 14 percent, and the government's failure to meet federally mandated contract allocations to small companies cost them nearly $1 billion in lost business. The situation could have been worse: in 2003 the White House proposed that the new Department of Homeland Security be exempt from laws requiring federal agencies to set goals for allocating a certain percentage of jobs to small companies. (Ultimately, under pressure from Congress, the White House backed off this idea.) In Iraq, where there is roughly $13 billion in contracting opportunities, the story is the same. Most contracts have been awarded, without competitive bidding processes, to large corporations with political connections. Halliburton, for instance, manages government contracts in Iraq worth some $8 billion

As it has ignored the ill effects of its legislative agenda on small companies, the administration has also dismantled the few federal initiatives designed to help them. Since Bush's inception in office, the SBA has seen the biggest percentage decline in funding of any agency; discretionary spending in the 2005 budget is slated to rise by 4 percent, but Bush has proposed cutting the SBA by 15 percent. Specific small-business programs also are imperiled. The administration has moved to do away with the Advanced Technology Program, a federal initiative that invests in new technologies and awards nearly three quarters of its grants to small companies. Over the past two years, the White House has proposed slashing funding for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), which provides business support services for small manufacturers, by nearly two thirds, even as manufacturers lost nearly 3 million jobs between 2000 and 2003. (The Clinton Administration, in 2000, requested nearly three times as much for the MEP as Bush requested for 2005.) In May, David Braunstein, president of California Manufacturing Technology Consulting and a leading adviser to small companies, told industry reporters that he already has laid off employees in preparation for the MEP downsizing. White House officials have relied on small-government rhetoric to explain the cuts. But the administration has had no qualms about aiding larger companies, as it did in 2001 with the $15 billion bailout of the airline industry.

Most incredibly, the Bush Administration has effectively destroyed the SBA's 7(a) loan program, the most important source of long-term capital for small companies. The consolidation of the U.S. banking sector has created significant obstacles to bank loans for small companies, to the point where the SBA loan programs now account for 40 percent of all long-term loans to small companies. Yet the Bush Administration has repeatedly tried to cut the program, proposing in 2002 that it be cut by half, and so a[illegible] funding it the following year th[illegible] January 2004 the program ran o[illegible] money and had to shut down; 2[illegible] loan applications were returned [illegible] funded. They are not likely to rec[illegible] any better attention this year; th[illegible] ministration plans to eliminate all[illegible] eral subsidies to the program in 2[illegible]

The aftershocks of the admini[illegible] tion's wholesale assault on small [illegible] ness will be considerable. Norm[illegible] during a period of economic w[illegible] ness, small entrepreneurs lead [illegible] country toward an economic[illegible] bound, as laid-off workers start [illegible] companies. In a survey of jol[illegible] managers taken during the 199[illegible] recession, 15 percent started [illegible] companies. The pattern has not [illegible] peated itself since the current [illegible] nomic slowdown began in 2001 [illegible] doubt in part because potential [illegible] trepreneurs have lacked the acce[illegible] capital, business advice, and he[illegible] care on which their predecessors [illegible] lied. Today, among managers [illegible] have lost their jobs, only 7 perc[illegible] say they are willing to try to s[illegible] new companies, as opposed to [illegible] percent in 2002. This deadenin[illegible] the entrepreneurial spirit will mak[illegible] harder for the economy to restar[illegible] self, no matter who is elected in [illegible] vember. And the undermining [illegible] programs backing small-scale [illegible] search will hinder innovation [illegible] decades to come.

Small companies can take s[illegible] comfort, however: The White Ho[illegible] did propose to increase funding fo[illegible] least one piece of its small-busi[illegible] budget. The administration wante[illegible] double the travel budget for the S[illegible] whose head, Hector Barreto, was [illegible] co-chairman of Bush's California c[illegible] paign in 2000 and has since m[illegible] diplomatic visits to states crucia[illegible] Republicans' congressional hopes. [illegible] Barreto tours the country on taxp[illegible] dollars, extolling his party's labors [illegible] behalf of small business, his audien[illegible] would do well to remember that [illegible] not they but their corporate coun[illegible] parts who have consistently profi[illegible] from the administration's promise

*Joshua Kurlant*

## ) GOES HE NATION

***state of our states is poor; and Bush, paradoxically, may benefit***

During the past three years, nearly every state in the union has been caught in a severe fis- crisis. In December 2002 an offi- at the National Governors Asso- ion characterized the financial ts as the worst since World War II, then later revised this already dire ook considerably downward, call- them, in fact, the worst since the r of 1812. "It's clear- ne worst since we've n keeping statistics," dded. The collection ate income and sales s, on which states de- d for most of their enue, was down 6 per- t, hurt by an economy n in recession. The ney that states had on d in the form of sur- ses and rainy-day ds fell to $14.5 billion, r cry from the $48.8 ion they enjoyed in 0. Budget shortfalls, surprisingly, grew and will contin- to grow, to a projected $54 billion ionwide in 2004. For the states, the ts of health care and education had raled upward, far faster than infla- n. New federal mandates—some not ded, some only partially so, such as No Child Left Behind Act, which uires states to conduct yearly tests of dents—burdened the states further, did homeland security, with its be- dering and costly shifts up from yel- v to orange and back again.



The governors went, hats in hand, seek from President Bush a bit of ancial assistance to help cover these rious costs, many of which, after all, re the federal government's doing. e President said no help was forth- ming. Mississippi senator Trent Lott ered a moral to the governors' re- ating backs. "They lived high on e hog in the 1990s," Lott said. "And now they're asking us to solve their problem?" Having failed in their mission, the governors, who in every state but Vermont are required by law to balance their budgets, proceeded to slash operating costs in ways both little and large. Twenty-five states drained their emergency funds, sixteen laid off employees, and thirteen informed workers that they were retiring early. Iowa increased tuition and fees at its universities by 18.5 percent, the largest jump in two decades. Prison inmates in Kentucky and California and elsewhere received early paroles because states either had too few cells to hold them or couldn't afford to adequately guard the prisons. A prosecutor in Virginia announced that budget cuts meant his office could no longer bring misdemeanor charges against people accused of domestic violence. Schoolteachers in Idaho said that the heat in classrooms was being turned down to save on electricity bills. North Carolina, facing a $2 billion deficit, took the novel step of unscrewing fluorescent lights from soda machines in all state buildings.

The governors, however, needed to do more than merely be mindful not to leave their lights on. Always loath to raise taxes, the governors, Democrats as well as Republicans, resorted to just that. In Arkansas people received the largest tax increase in the state's history, and from a Republican governor. In Alabama another Republican governor, one who boasted of never having voted for a single tax increase during his three terms in Congress, proposed the largest tax increase in that state's history. In Oregon voters rejected their governor's planned tax increases in a referendum, electing instead to realize the thoughtlessness of their majority and trigger deep cuts to social programs, such as eliminating medical insurance for 49,000 low-income residents and cutting funds for education, which forced some schools to close for summer vacation almost a month sooner than planned. Maryland quietly raised fees for assorted licenses, withheld promised funding for state agencies, and sought to salve its projected $1.7 billion budget shortfall with 11,500 newly legal slot machines.

Although the recession is now officially over, growth has been slow to return to many states, most notably Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Missouri—four of the dozen or so states expected to determine the outcome of the November contests. It is by now a truism that people vote their pocketbooks, gauging how well off (or not) they are and voting accordingly, and with Republicans controlling the Congress and the presidency, as well as the governorships of many crucial swing states, one might imagine that Americans' fiscal worries would redound to the favor of the Democrats and John Kerry. But state budget crises inevitably engender so much contradictory finger-pointing—pitting not only Republicans against Democrats but also state officials against federal officials and governors against legislators—that the crises often wind up prompting little more in voters than confusion, anger, and a mistrust of government in general. It is all too clear to which party's benefit their mistrust accrues.

The fiercest fighting in November's election may very well occur in Ohio, where President Bush won by less than 4 percent in 2000 and where early polls this year have shown the two challengers in essentially a statistical tie. Since January 2001, 165,000 workers with good, high-paying manufacturing jobs, or more than 15 percent of the state's total manufacturing employment, have been let go, their jobs eliminated. Overall, the state's unemployment rate has worsened considerably, from 3.6 percent in 2001 to 5.9 percent in February 2004. Nine hours after delivering the 2004 State of the Union address, President Bush landed in Toledo to register his empathy for Ohioans. "I fully recognize in Ohio there are still troubled times," he said. "The manu-

facturing here is sluggish at best, and, therefore, people are looking for work. People who could rely upon a steady job in the manufacturing sector are hoping to be able to realize their hopes by finding work elsewhere." Bush has visited Ohio more than sixteen times since taking office.

The governor of Ohio is Bob Taft, a Republican and the great-grandson of President William Howard Taft. Now in his second term, Taft is working to steer the state through its budget mess, a $4 billion deficit for 2003 that, under the usual pressures of the past few years, has only worsened. Taft has closed at least one prison and forced two institutions that took care of people with developmental disabilities to shut their doors, moving the patients to what he calls "community-based settings," or, in other words, less-structured and poorly funded halfway houses and group homes. As a result of Taft's cuts and his fiddling with Medicaid eligibility, 30,000 single mothers and low-income parents have lost their medical benefits and 800,000 poor Ohioans no longer can visit their dentists or eve doctors. Taft emptied out the state's rainy-day fund and cut funding for the parks by 17 percent, leading the state to contemplate charging entrance fees and to rely on the kindness of volunteers to perform previously paid labor. In one twenty-two-month period he dismissed 3,000 state workers and then thanked those who remained for their sacrifice and good service through "tough budget times."

In Ohio, governors traditionally have come in two models: Republicans with do-nothing stratagems, who have believed that the administration that governs least governs longest; and ill-fated Democrats who, facing the inherited budget crises left behind by Republicans, often have had no choice but to raise taxes. Democrats who raised taxes didn't remain popular with voters for long. Former governor James Rhodes, a Republican who served a state record sixteen years in office, once took to task a staff member who had been inveighing against Democrats in the legislature and suggesting that Ohio, if not the world, would be a better place without their party. "We need 'em," Rhodes reasoned. "Who would raise the taxes?"

When Taft ran for reelection in 2002, he broadly painted his Democratic opponent, Tim Hagan, as a taxer and a spender, in the time-honored Republican tradition. In speeches, Taft referred to him as "Taxin' Tim Hagan," even as he allowed, sotto voce, that, given the looming budget crisis, even he might avail himself of "narrowly tailored revenue enhancements." Another word for such enhancements, in English, is "taxes." Taft has indeed been forced to avail himself of new taxes, though he has preferred taxes of narrowly tailored sorts. He has, for instance, left untouched Ohio's middle- and upper-class voters, and in particular has chosen not to scale back the generous subsidies on their property taxes, 10 percent of which are paid by the state. Instead, he has turned to taxes on sales and sins, namely alcohol and tobacco, all of which disproportionately affect the poor.

As Taft has made modest retreats on taxes, he has been careful always to take loud, conservative stances on cultural issues. This January he signed legislation allowing Ohioans to carry concealed handguns. He has allied himself with the Maker at every opportunity and sides with those in favor of retaining the state's motto, "With God, all things are possible," and of memorializing it on the grounds of the statehouse. As the economy soured during his first term in office, Taft's don't-turn-to-government rhetoric turned gloomier, more Old Testament. Throughout history, he argued, Ohioans have been a thick-skinned and hardy lot. Therefore, Ohioans today, whom Taft favorably and frequently compares to the pioneers who settled the state in its early days, should harken back to the day when government gave them nothing and remember how those pioneers got along just fine without so much big government interfering in their daily lives. In his second inaugural address, in January 2003, Taft called for a "season of sacrifice" and optimistically asked all the pioneers in his s to locate, among the cuts and tech services he had proposed, some g mer of opportunity.

Taft's, and indeed Bush's, rhetor self-reliance—however romantic however ignorant of the fact that neers received grants, of land and m ey, from the government—has ceeded in deflecting the anger of vo When prompted for their own s tions to their state's current w Ohioans have struck distinctly publican poses, with 86 percent sa that elected officials should focus spending restraint instead of hig taxes and an incredible 60 percent porting the institution of a flat More than three quarters said t supported a proposal to limit all st spending to the rate of inflation, spite the fact that vital parts of economy—higher education health care, for example—grow m faster than inflation. The situation Ohio hints at what may prove a pa doxical reality in struggling states tionwide: that even when a Repu can government fails to ensure economic welfare of its citizens, it n ertheless may be Republicans, w their anti-government rhetoric, w reap the benefits. Taft's new sett may learn simply to lower their pectations of what government can for them. When calamity strikes budget falls short, they may, like th pioneer forebears, simply blame the selves—or, perhaps, the righte wrath of God, who alone makes things possible.

—*Paul Maliszew*

*Luke Mitchell is a senior editor* Harper's Magazine. *His last Briefi "A Run on Terror," appeared in March issue.*

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*Paul Maliszewski's writing has a peared in* The Paris Review *and t Pushcart Prize anthologies. His last ticle for* Harper's Magazine, "W *Happy Few" (co-authored with Hadl Ross), appeared in the May 2003 issu*

# EW BOOKS

*y John Leonard*



magine me back in the 1970s, during the reign of the tin-pot Ferdinand and the sexpot Imelda, a gurt-faced Yankee Doodle disemking from a Batmobile at a villa oute Cebu, the seaport city in the southn Philippines where the Japanese ıy golf and Bloomingdale's runs the cker racket. There are palm trees, useboys, chickens, goats, and butrflies the size of bats in which adimir Nabokov is said to have taka speckled interest and so, there-e, must I. Cebu also happens to be ıere Magellan's circumnavigation of e globe was permanently interrupted the King of Mactan, Lapu Lapu, on pril 27, 1521.

Lapu Lapu's name is one of the few ings Hugh Thomas neglects to men-n in RIVERS OF GOLD: THE RISE F THE SPANISH EMPIRE (Random House, $35), but he does describe the Cebu skirmish as "a gratuitous adventure that deserved to end badly." Which it did, wrote one eyewitness, with a "scimitar" and so many lances of iron and cane "that they deprived of life our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our guide." Although the Spanish stuck around the archipelago for another 380 years until it was North America's turn to play Monopoly, Thomas wraps up his grand narrative, a minute-by-minute account of three decades of audacity, a pirate's prologue to imperialism, with the death of Magellan—but only after an excess of mad queens, old salts, arch bishops, cunning courtiers, greedy businessmen, missionaries, conquistadors, the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews, and the start-up of the transatlantic slave trade.



What were they after, these Renaissance Europeans in frail caravels with blood-red crosses on their moon sails? Spice, silver, sugar, tobacco? "They knew that their mission was to seek out new Christian souls," writes Thomas, the preeminent English-language historian of everything Hispanic: "Gold and glory were the supporters of their coat of arms on which Christianity dominated the face of the shield." Not for him any of the hand-wringing, breast-beating, and knee-jerking we have come to expect from more modest and guilt-ridden notaries. Just listen:

> They made their conquests with a clear conscience, certain they were taking with them civilization, believing they would in the end permit these new people to leave behind their backward conditions. Who can doubt now that they were right to denounce the idea of religion based on human sacrifice or the simple worship of the sun or the rain?

This flabbergasts. And not only because Thomas has just explained how the African slave trade began when the Spanish needed dirty work done that the local "Indians" were too sick or tired or dead to do. But also because he's already described an Inquisition that burned heretics at the stake in the town squares of Seville and Madrid, which sounds like human sacrifice to me. And because worshiping the sun or rain doesn't seem so "simple" if you look at the jaguar masks and altar toads of Ixtapa, the plumed serpents and dragon donkeys of Teotihuacán, the iguana tomb guardians and cat-god urns of Oaxaca, Palenque's sarcophagus rubbings, Chichén Itzá's skull racks, Tenochtitlán's chacmools, and El Tajín's totems. Spain sought fearfully to bury all of them, yet every single one compares favorably with a pair of embroidered

*st Landing of Christopher Columbus* by Dr. Lee [illegible] © 2004 Board of Trustees, tional Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gift of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch; lor lithograph of Aztec idols, by Guillo Cicken [illegible] Historical Picture Archive/CORBIS

(Harvard, $19.95). But natural evolu-

Demos, a social historian and Yale profes- [illegible] Jonathan Edwards, Fernand Braudel, and Sigmund Freud, among many interrogative others, as well as from the family [illegible] and court [illegible] records. He has superbly [illegible] about the role of women in the American economy, the hypersexual Dirge mentality of the sailing-craft era, and the surprising [illegible] captivity narratives, suggesting that at least one white woman in the seventeenth century would rather have remained with her Indian abductors than go back to Boston. Circles and Lines, [illegible] and lecture series at Harvard, is a step back from these magnificent [illegible] an attempt to identify, [illegible] ordinary Americans [illegible] from a [illegible] eighteenth-century psychology of seasons, cycles, and family circles, recurring patterns and repeat performances, [illegible] celebrate eighteenth-century appreciation of "improvement" opportunity," and



It's that [illegible] time. John Ross [illegible] from his redoubt in Tobyhanna, [illegible] in Unregulated Village in the [illegible] to the Bay Area [illegible] post-punk and radical [illegible] in the 1960s and [illegible] the Black Panthers, Weathermen, and Earth First!, [illegible] in the preaching and politics of Malcolm X and the Zapatistas in the [illegible] and to Baghdad as a human shield against American bombs in a brand-new Germany, at which this sixty-six-year-old Huck Finn/Holden Caulfield/Dennis the Menace/Weatherman wannabe and subversive journalist is no happier than he was in any decade of the old one. But he is in no mood to dicker or sell out rather than he is at finding a buyer. And his best friends—those he's still talking to, are dead, including the body buried in Trinidad, California, under the gravestone of L. P. Schmabel Jr. (1855–1915), who, [illegible] may not be Lang or the original Haymarket bomber.

[illegible] LIFE AND DEATH ON [illegible] (Nation Books, $15.95) [illegible] a sort of historical novel, call it socialist surrealism. Because Ross talks to Schmabel and Schmabel talks back, we get a highly idiosyncratic account of industrial trade unionism, the socialist, communist, and anarchist movements, government repression, and left-wing singsong, as well as not altogether un-

Unless, that is, you count E. Rawlins in LITTLE SCARL (Little, Brown, $24.95), [illegible] new Walter Mosley mystery in a ser[illegible] that is rewriting the postwar history [illegible] the United States from the other s[illegible] of the surveillance camera. Easy is [illegible] just in time for the Watts riots of 196[illegible] "knee deep in dead black women." [illegible] now the forty-five-year-old private [illegible] tective with the murderous friend a[illegible] the makeshift family—the orphans [illegible] has rescued from a burning world [illegible] seems to be working with the L.A. co[illegible] instead of against them, a situation [illegible] can't get used to but enjoys exploiting even as the destruction of his neighborhood is also giddy-making, a rec[illegible] turned into a reshuffle becoming th[illegible] an insurrection. Everything is up [illegible] grabs, ripe for reinventing, includi[illegible] discrepancies of power. A redhead[illegible] woman will turn out not to have di[illegible] by accident in the riots but to ha[illegible] been murdered on purpose by the u[illegible] likeliest of suspects, a one-man ri[illegible] Self-hatred and race hatred are the s[illegible] cret texts here, in the best so far of t[illegible] eight Easy Rawlins novels, as if R[illegible] Macdonald had teamed with W.E. Du Bois to find out more than eith[illegible] wanted to know about the original s[illegible] of the Americas.

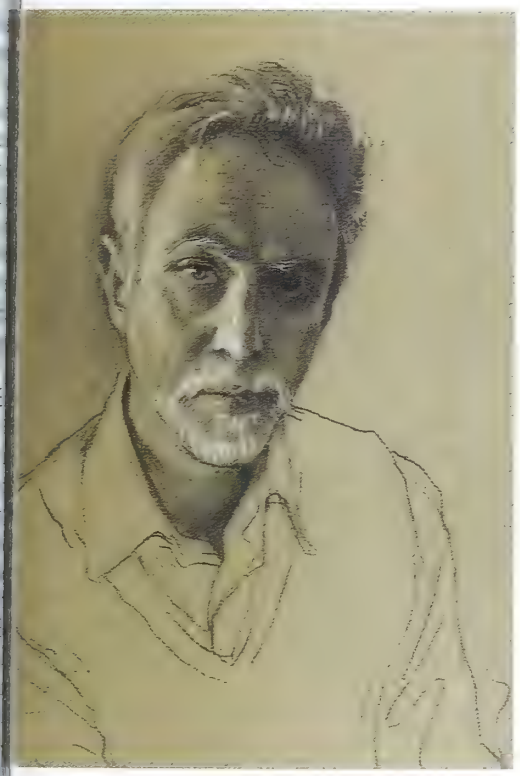
# ARVEST OF A QUIET EYE

## M. Coetzee and the art of lucidity

*Jennifer Szalai*

ssed in this essay:

*beth Costello*. by J. M. Coetzee. Viking, 2003. 230 pages. $21.95.



The urge to confess, to explain oneself to others, seems to hold little temptation for the South ican novelist J. M. Coetzee, whose n prose is matched by a resolute un- ingness to talk about it. Recipient he 2003 Nobel Prize for literature, nor of more than fifteen volumes of ion and criticism, the sixty-four- r-old Coetzee rarely grants inter- ws, and when he does, questions ut the meaning of his work are po- ly rebuffed. In *Doubling the Point*, a 2 collection of essays and exchanges h David Attwell that is now, lam-

*ifer Szalai is a senior editor of* Harper's azine.

entably, out of print, Coetzee remarks, "[My novel] stands by itself against anything I might say about what it says."

Since uttering these words, Coetzee has also retreated from the typical public address, choosing to tell a story rather than to expound the kind of philosophical tract or political manifesto that has become an accepted ritual of literary celebrity. *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee's most recent book, gathers several of these tales together in a volume divided into eight "Lessons"—episodes in the life of an esteemed novelist whose renown demands from her those very treatises Coetzee himself is so careful to avoid. The elderly Costello roams the lecture circuit, discussing issues such as animal rights and the problem of evil, only to have her arguments undermined by members of the audience or by the fluttering intrusions of her own self-doubt.

*Elizabeth Costello* baffled the critics, who could agree on some adjectives ("odd," "puzzling") but whose ultimate responses ranged from fulsome admiration to scornful derision. For every positive review such as that of James Wood, who praised the volume in the *London Review of Books* as "more affecting than anything else [Coetzee] has written," there was at least another that echoed the contempt of John Banville's essay in *The Nation*, in which Coetzee was faulted for "a surprisingly clumsy and ... banal conceit" in a book that "reads like a suicide note." Jonathan Yardley, the critic for the *Washington Post*, even took it upon himself to dismiss the Nobel Prize recipient as "an immensely overrated writer" and *Elizabeth Costello* as "not a novel but an anti-novel."

Disregard, for a moment, the gracelessness of this epithet (which makes about as much sense as disparaging a staple for being not a paper clip but an anti–paper clip), and Yardley's fulminations read like a churlish précis of all the book's negative reviews. There is the charge of non-fiction masquerading as fiction; of Coetzee masquerading as Costello; of philosophy masquerading as storytelling. There is the incessant worrying over the "silliness" of Costello's arguments, which are "short on intelligible" and likened to "harangues." And, finally, there is the incredulous "does Costello/Coetzee really believe _____?" deployed in response to Costello's most contentious statements.

That the most bilious reviewers were so preoccupied with the uninteresting question of whether Elizabeth Costello is an alter ego for J. M. Coetzee indicates the ease with which banalities can infect otherwise critical minds. For this book, *Elizabeth Costello*, clearly announces itself as a work of fiction; and, as such, Yardley, Banville, et al. might have saved themselves considerable frustration if they had not insisted on reading the book as the philosophical treatise it never pretended to be. Indeed, *Elizabeth Costello* is a remarkable complement to Coetzee's previous work. It is a story that reveals the possibilities of storytelling through the peregrinations of an aging novelist constantly confronted by her obstinate body and meddling intellect. To read it is to recall the themes that Coetzee has pursued in all his novels—the reality of suffering, the ineffability that lies beyond language—brought forth, honed, burnished by an experiment with form.

The critical essay is uncomfortable with lapses in logic. If I were to write something that contradicts what I've written thus far—to posit that Coetzee can't stop talking about his work, for example, or to de-

clare *Elizabeth Costello* an infuriating collection of polemics—the line of reasoning would fall apart. Tidiness is the critic's armor; she prefers to solve mysteries and to answer questions. For the author of *Elizabeth Costello*, however, the scenario is altogether different. Fiction allows Coetzee to pose questions without answering them. His novels withhold conclusions instead of readying them for consumption. *Disgrace*, his 1999 novel set in post-apartheid South Africa, declines to offer an easy deliverance from the country's troubles; it includes a scene in which the white protagonist is set alight by a group of black men while his daughter is raped in the next room, and it ends without any traces of political salvation. Coetzee imagines the lives of his characters with all of their suffering, and *Disgrace* is devastating because of this intimacy. We are brought closer to a life's wretched particulars rather than consoled by pristine abstractions.

It is curious, therefore, that some reviewers were so anxious to read *Elizabeth Costello* as the work of a writer who "seems to have lost faith in the power of storytelling," "a man tormented by and disgusted with the moral ambiguousness of fiction," considering that such judgments are embarrassed by the book itself, whose very existence is evidence to the contrary. Most of *Elizabeth Costello* is, after all, made up of stories that were told in lieu of lectures, and it is Costello's life, not just the dithering content of her academic addresses, that compose the truth of these fictions.

We first encounter Elizabeth Costello in the spring of 1995, as the sixty-six-year-old novelist travels to Pennsylvania to accept a literary award. Costello, like Coetzee, has written a novel that recasts a classic (in her case, *Ulysses*; in his, *Robinson Crusoe*), and she has spent her career imagining herself into the lives of her characters, inhabiting their bodies as well as their minds. In a lecture on "The Lives of Animals," she refutes the philosopher Thomas Nagel, who famously argued that imagining what it is like to be a bat is impossible for creatures as alien to that experience as we are. Costello, whose novel *The House on Eccles Street* tells the story of Marion Bloom from *Ulysses*, describes how the limits imposed by a philosopher's logic are foiled by a writer's imagination:

> . . . *Marion Bloom never existed.* Marion Bloom was a figment of James Joyce's imagination. If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life.

The embodied existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster does not easily lend itself to the disembodied language in which we debate the kinds of souls animals have, whether or not they employ some form of reason, what sort of rights they deserve. The philosopher's language speaks in abstractions, whereas the lives of animals can be imagined only in a language that is kinetic and visceral. Costello points to poetry, such as the work of Ted Hughes, that "is a matter . . . not of inhabiting another mind but of inhabiting another body. . . . Poetry that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him." She admits that her own words "lack the power to bring home to you the wholeness, the unabstracted, unintellectual nature, of that animal being" and urges her audience "to read the poets who return the living, electric being to language."

Costello's audience doesn't seem to listen. Its members persist in demanding from her the vocabulary of politics, poking their fingers through the holes in her logic, requesting directives, further instructions:

> "What wasn't clear to me," the man is saying, "is what you are actually targeting. Are you saying we should close down the factory farms? Are you saying we should stop eating meat? Are you saying we should treat animals more humanely, kill them more humanely? Are you saying we should stop experiments *on* animals? Are you saying we should stop experiments *with* animals . . . ? Can you clarify? Thank you."

One can see why Coetzee no longer delivers lectures; that a writer is expected to speak as an expert on something other than writing is one of the more perverse features of literary fame. Elizabeth Costello occasionally refuses to comply—she says she's aware that joining herself, "like a tributary s[tream] running into a great river, to th[e] Western discourse of man versus [n]ature, of reason versus unreason," wou[ld] "the concession of the entire b[attle]. Yet she often succumbs to exp[ec]tations, to the language of the se[ries] rather than the story, and whe[n] she does so she gets herself into tro[uble]. During the Lesson on animals she [wan]ders from her comments on w[ords] and makes a daft comparison bet[ween] the slaughter of cattle and the m[urder] of Jews in the Holocaust. The nex[t] she receives a letter from an aging[ex] Abraham Stern, who assails her fo[r] clumsy analogy: "You misunder[stand] the nature of likenesses. . . . If Jews [are] treated like cattle, it does not f[ollow] that cattle are treated like J[ews]." Costello's son, John, observes ho[w] mother only embarrasses herself [when] she slips into the language o[f] polemicist: "A strange ending [to a] strange talk, he thinks, ill-gauge[d] argued. Not her *métier*, argument[ative]. She should not be here."

During a lecture on "The Fut[ure] the Novel," Costello defines "th[e] ditional novel" as "an attempt t[o] derstand human fate one case at a [time] to understand how it comes abou[t] some fellow being, having start[ed] point A and having undergone [ex]periences B and C and D, ends up at [po]int Z." She makes an analogy to hi[s] claiming that we entrust both t[he] plore "the respective contributio[ns] character and circumstance to [our] ing the present." But again she is [o]whelmed by the dubiousness of h[er] marks: "She is not sure, as she liste[ns] her own voice, whether she be[lieves] any longer in what she is saying. [In] deed, her fumbling efforts to defi[ne] tion in the terms of an historica[l] rative, as a linear progression fro[m] point to another, are ultimately [dis]rupted by the story through whic[h s]herself, Elizabeth Costello, is l[ed]." As *Elizabeth Costello* the book m[oves] forward, page by page, Elizabeth C[ost]lo the character staggers forward, [then] shuffles backward, then veers t[o] side, then stumbles forward again [and] in a bramble of contradictions.

In Lesson 6, Costello entangle[s] self yet again. She accepts an invit[ation] to speak on the subject of "Witne[ss], lence, and Censorship" becaus[e]

)een reading *The Very Rich Hours* )unt von Stauffenberg, a 1980 nov- Paul West about the plot to as- nate Hitler. The execution scenes Vest's book are described so re- lessly, with such terrifying detail, the novel "had sucked her into a d of bottomless dejection. *Why )ou doing this to me?* she wanted to out as she read, to God knows m." The experience convinces her "to save our humanity, certain gs . . . must remain off-stage," and finds herself moved to argue for a n of censorship:

> That is my thesis today: that certain ings are not good to read *or to write*. . I take seriously the claim that the tist risks a great deal by venturing into rbidden places: risks, specifically, him- lf; risks, perhaps, all. I take this claim riously because I take seriously the for- iddenness of forbidden places. The cel- ır in which the July 1944 plotters were anged is one such forbidden place. I o not believe we should go into that cel- ır, any of us. . . . I believe that bars should e erected over the cellar mouth, with a ronze memorial plaque saying *Here died* . . followed by a list of the dead and neir dates, and that should be that."

stello reads her "homily," as she s it, before an audience that hap- s to include Paul West, whose pres- e at the conference was only re- led to her once she had arrived. stered, she tries to speak to him be- she goes onstage; he remains silent he babbles forth a stream of rea- s, not all of them coherent, for the ument she is about to deliver. The ture itself she is unable to finish, l the questions from the audience ow her into a mire of confusion and -doubt. "'The experience that writ- offers, or reading—'" she begins answer to a question, "'they are the ne thing, for my purposes, here, to- —' (but are they the same thing, re- y?—she is losing her track, what is track?)." Her own misgivings per- t. "Paul West was only doing his tterly duty," she says to herself. "In e person of his hangman he was ening her eyes to human depravity another of its manifold forms. In e persons of the hangman's victims was reminding her of what poor, ked, quivering creatures we all are. hat is wrong with that? . . . What right had she not to know what, in all too clear a sense, she already knew?"

The immediate questions aroused by such a scenario are also the least interesting ones: Does Costello really believe that a writer should censor his own words? Does Coetzee? Perhaps Costello does, though she doesn't seem to be so sure of what she believes, and we can only gather what Coetzee believes from what he has written—that is, a book in which Costello's teetering arguments are losing their balance on every page.

That Coetzee himself has written the torture chamber into his other novels, evoking the horrors that take place there, should further confound any attempt to isolate Costello's lecture from everything else that takes place in the chapter—as if she were simply the mouthpiece for the polemic Coetzee wanted to write but didn't. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Coetzee's novel about an unnamed Empire, the Magistrate is accused of treason and subjected to tormentors who

> were interested only in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well, which very soon forgets them when its head is gripped and a pipe is pushed down its gullet and pints of salt water are poured into it till it coughs and retches and flails and voids itself.

The words in this passage pull us toward the overwhelming rush at the end, where the eviscerated flesh is reduced to its most elementary reflexes; Coetzee forces us to descend into the torture chamber *with* the Magistrate. The sterile propositions of the philosopher or the theologian are useless there. Only the vivid language of the writer is able to elicit a brush with evil and the suffering it creates. "That must have been [West's] wager with himself," writes Coetzee in *Elizabeth Costello*. "To tell the story of their ineptitude and its consequences from beginning to end, and to leave one feeling, to one's surprise, authentic pity, authentic terror."

William Barrett, in his brilliant book *Irrational Man* (1958), notes that there is a knowledge realized through living rather than


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reasoning—a reality that is palpable and tactile, inhering in body and blood, to which the intellect, detached and aloof, is oblivious. In Coetzee's novels, the earthly body is where truth resides; his characters are ensnared between the doctrines dressed up as truth and the truth of the flesh, vulnerable yet unyielding. For the Magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, "the moral dimension of my plight . . . even the prospect of defending myself in court, have lost all interest under the pressure of appetite and physical functions and the boredom of living one hour after another. I have caught a cold; my whole being is preoccupied in sniffing and sneezing, in the misery of being simply a body that feels itself sick and wants to be well." In *The Master of Petersburg* it is Coetzee's Dostoevsky, trying to solve the mystery behind his stepson's revolutionary activity and apparent suicide, who spurns abstractions for an embodied truth: "*Believe*: another word. What does it mean, to believe? I believe in the body on the pavement below. I believe in the blood and the bones." And *Age of Iron*'s Mrs. Curren, a South African white woman whose cancer is gnawing its way through her body during the final years of apartheid, wonders when the inhuman ideologies will at last wither away: "The age of iron. After which comes the age of bronze. How long, how long before the softer ages return in their cycle, the age of clay, the age of earth?"

Beliefs that aren't in any way tied to the earth are the ephemeral debris of overactive minds. The last Lesson of *Elizabeth Costello*, entitled "At the Gate," depicts what seem to be Costello's attempts to pass through the afterlife (toward . . . what? it is never really clear) only to be deterred by a panel of judges demanding from her a "statement of belief." As a writer, Costello tells them that she is a secretary of the invisible, believing whatever she needs to believe in order to give voice to those who choose to summon her. Unsatisfied, the judges ask her to return another day with a different answer, and Costello begins to realize she can only believe in that which "she does not have to invent: this dumb, faithful body that has accompanied her every step of the way, this gentle, lumbering monster that has been given to her to look after, this shadow turned to flesh that stands on two feet like a bear and laves itself continuously from the inside with blood."

Neither reason nor religion is in any way involved in this revelation, which is described in animal terms ("like a bear") rather than by an appeal to an idea or to the divine. In her testimony before the judges, Costello recalls her childhood in rural Victoria and "the frogs who live there, some as small as the tip of my little finger, creatures so insignificant and so remote from your loftier concerns that you would not hear of them otherwise." She acknowledges that Elizabeth Costello the writer could think of the frog as allegory, as a vehicle for her own imagination, "but to the frogs themselves it is no allegory, it is the thing itself, the only thing. . . . They exist whether or not I tell you about them, whether or not I believe in them. It is because of the indifference of those little frogs to my belief . . . that I believe in them." Her conclusion echoes the kind of redemption that Coetzee's characters eventually reach at the end of his novels: disabused of the fantasies devised by the mind, they arrive at a truth that is modest, humble, tethered to the ground.

Perhaps this is why essays about Coetzee inevitably include the word "bleak," for his characters never attain the salvation they initially seek out. There is no rescue from this earth, with all its suffering; there is only fitful alienation from it, or an acceptance, however tentative, of whatever nature puts before them. A restless intellect encourages them to trust in abstractions without examining what it is to exist as earthly creatures. But Coetzee's characters do have that examination imposed upon them, and they struggle with their hopes for deliverance until they finally yield themselves to the truth, to that irreducible element of being they share with the beasts.

"Animals have only their silence left with which to confront us," notes Elizabeth Costello. The silent beings that populate Coetzee's novels—the dogs in *Disgrace* and *Age of Iron*; Friday, wordless and tongueless, in *Foe*—teem with life, and their presence, although mute, is a disclosure: they reveal a reality that lies beyond language, a terrain neglected by our [illegible]-mongering minds.

Poetry and storytelling push t[illegible] this landscape, but, stubborn and [illegible] it resists settlement. The symbol[illegible] et Hugo von Hofmannsthal [illegible] about these excursions, or tried[illegible] his 1902 "Lord Chandos Le[illegible] wherein the Lord apologizes to Fr[illegible] Bacon for a "total renunciation [illegible] erary activity," as he has lost the ab[illegible] ity to think or speak coherently [illegible] anything at all." His crisis of lan[illegible] begins with abstract words and cl[illegible] nates in a syndrome of utter li[illegible] paralysis; language becomes a[illegible] poverished medium for renderi[illegible] silent, vibrant world around him. [illegible] zee adds to Lord Chandos's tumb[illegible] to the ineffable with the curious [illegible] script to *Elizabeth Costello*, wh[illegible] presented to us after we have ac[illegible] panied the lady novelist to the ga[illegible] a "Letter of Elizabeth, Lady Cha[illegible] to Francis Bacon," the Lady wri[illegible] her husband's "illness" and of he[illegible] troubles with words that curdle [illegible] the page:

> (I cease to hold myself back, I an[illegible] now, I yield myself to the figur[illegible] you see, Sir, how I am taken ove[illegible] *rush* I call it when I do not call it *r*[illegible] *ture*, the rush and the rapture a[illegible] the same, but in ways that I desp[illegible] explaining though they are clear[illegible] eye, *my eye* I call it, *my inner eye* as[illegible] I had an eye inside that looked [illegible] words one by one as they passe[illegible] soldiers on parade, *like soldiers [illegible] rade* I say.)

Lady Chandos struggles to conv[illegible] experience that is evidently re[illegible] her, trying to reassure herself [illegible] metaphors ("*the rush* I call it . . . *m*[illegible] I call it . . . *like soldiers on parl*[illegible] say"), though none of them su[illegible] Like Marion Bloom with her [illegible] sodic coda to *Ulysses*, the Lady [illegible] the book back to the body on[illegible] find that the body's truth lies be[illegible] the brink of language. But [illegible] Chandos isn't content with yie[illegible] herself to the rush of experience[illegible] "yes I said yes I will Yes" in th[illegible] line of *Ulysses* is an ecstatic surre[illegible] whereas what closes Lady Chan[illegible] letter is an anguished plea for s[illegible] tion: "Save me, dear Sir, save my [illegible] band! Write! . . . He writes to yo[illegible] I write to you, who are known a[illegible]

ıen to select your words and set
ı in place and build your judg-
ts as a mason builds a wall with
cs. Drowning, we write out of our
rate fates. Save us."

ıis quest for salvation, which seeks
ge in reason and words, hangs at
end of *Elizabeth Costello* like a dis-
ed balloon that has been punc-
d by everything that comes before
o finish on such a note makes this
c, strangely, even less forgiving
Coetzee's other novels, though
obvious cruelties plumbed in those
cs are altogether absent from this
Deliverance is impossible: but
re Coetzee's previous characters
meaning within the small, earth-
nd measures of their existence, Eliz-
h Costello's humble redemption
ıe gate is followed by a plunge back
the abyss. Lady Elizabeth Chan-
we can imagine, was not saved; the
apparatus of reason that was Ba-
s legacy befuddles, rather than en-
tens, the other Elizabeth C.

There is a scene from *Boyhood* (1997), Coetzee's memoir of his early years in South ca (a memoir that is told, with racteristic attention to form, in third person, present tense), in ch the young Coetzee learns of embarrassment that awaits his childish disclosures:

)nce, during the early months in Worcester, a boy from his class had wan-ered in through the open front door nd found him lying on his back under chair. "What are you doing there?" he ad asked. "Thinking," he had replied nthinkingly: "I like thinking." Soon veryone in his class knew about it: the ew boy was odd, he wasn't normal. rom that mistake he has learned to be rudent. Part of being prudent is always ) tell less rather than more.

e author's achievements owe much his lesson in restraint. His laconic ions are studies in precision: the rative unfurls in a controlled line; rhythms are quiet, taut, intense. e prudence he sustains when invit-to a lecture or an interview also es him well, insofar as it allows the k to testify on its own behalf.

That Coetzee refuses to save us—deliver us at the end of his nov-, so that riddles are unriddled, dilemmas resolved—attests to the truth of the story and the power of its telling. Storytelling offers a way of living through questions without succumbing to the needling impulse to answer them. Even if there is an element of experience that will forever elude language, the story can carry us to the threshold; then it is our turn to live through the rest. ■

# THE NOVELIST AND THE HANGMAN

## When horror invades protocol

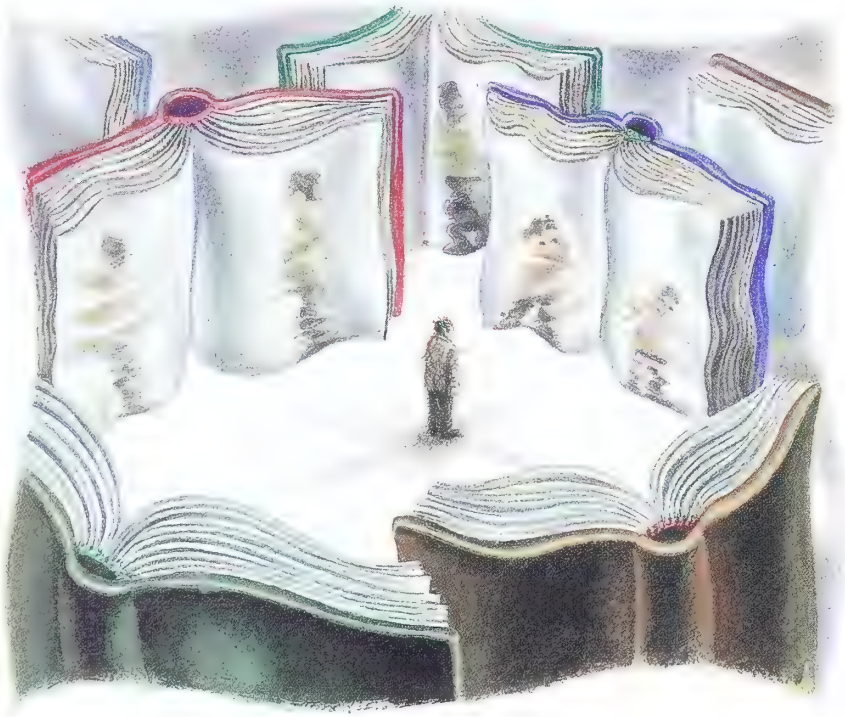
*By Paul West*

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Discussed in this essay:

Lesson 6, "The Problem of Evil," from *Elizabeth Costello*, by J. M. Coetzee.

*The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, by Paul West. Overlook Press, 1991. 366 pages. $13.95.



ration by Ray Bartkus

### I.

Before I ever set eyes on *Elizabeth Costello*, J. M. Coetzee's latest book, I heard that the sixth chapter was given over to me and a novel of mine from a quarter of a century ago.

Thus primed, I missed any chance of discovering those twenty-six pages as a surprise in the course of innocent perusal. I knew what was in them, more or less, and I read them first in a mood somewhere between pleasure and pride. There was no way in which I could achieve a so-called normal

*The most recent of Paul West's twenty-four novels,* The Immensity of the Here and Now, *won a Pushcart Prize. His memoir "Bluebells" appeared in the June 2003 issue.*

reading of the book; but I could see I brought to my reading some special qualifications even if they demanded my peering back under time's visor to the brash young author I was then.

The book that stirs both Coetzee and his Elizabeth is *The Secret Hours of Count von Stauffenberg*, about the abortive briefcase-bomb plot against Adolf Hitler in 1944. In my other twenty-three novels, we hear nothing, so my early contribution to the anti-Nazi resistance figures like a sample in a test tube, a cagily set-up synecdoche amid, presumably, kindred books. Let me for a moment set aside the gravamen of Costello's charges. The net effect of finding yourself appropriated, as both author and character, as malefic and real, is somewhat like reading *Madame Bovary* and finding, tucked away into the middle pages, a discarded book review by Flaubert recycled as an indictment by apothecary Homais. Not even her hint at West's "rather handsome profile" saves the day. Feeling like this, of course, ostensibly to promote serious literary or philosophical discourse, tints your response to the rest of the book (Costello jawing her way around the world for fee or prize) and certainly to any rereading of Lesson 6. It is as if Coetzee uses *me* to rout *her*.

On the level of real folks, I seem to have run into Coetzee just once, in Pennsylvania, and I once heard from someone who'd heard from someone else that Coetzee was indeed savoring my Stauffenberg book. At least he knew I was real, which I guess meant to him eligible for manipulation as a walk-on, not a Coetzee figment imagined into being.

Reading *Elizabeth Costello*, I found myself drawn sotto voce into the discreet spectacle of an author banishing a cantankerous ghost whose primal views he did not share but had nonetheless haunted him. Indeed, she is the vox that finally voices anathema and has to be scotched either in an aside or by someone in the audience she's addressing. Do the hints get through, then, enough to convince us *he*'s on the side of West rather than Costello? I think so. Costello herself is made to claim that West will have "defenders by the thousand," dubbing him "*not a devil but a hero*."

I am happy to report that *The Secret Hours* is still in print after so long a time being read and taught, indeed redeciphered at a recent conference in France devoted to my work, about which I feel content, especially after the fact that my narrator is Stauffenberg himself, aghast as ever at his Hamlet-like tendencies (he wanted to kill Hitler *and* survive to run the new Germany). "Only kneelers find wild strawberries," begins his long narrative, but he knows what he means: the earth will repay. And any obsession with hangmen and torturers, such as bothers Costello, is entirely his, justifiable and seemly for obvious reasons.

A first-person narrator has license and should be dealt with as such. His (or her) premises are not necessarily the author's, or there is little point in having him or her. But Stauffenberg (real man ted into figment then ted back into the world to resemble himself) is enraged, a luminous, even numinous, humanist, yes, but *enraged*, and his ghost needs no after-the-novel bouquet from me. A dead narrator who interrupts his cry to narrate another death by execution and then resumes is quite a specimen, as Mario Vargas Llosa, to my delight, found on reading *Stauff* in 1980. Lines, not mine, that fit Stauff (as I call him), if you are any sort of literary person, include "Unspeakable . . . is the sorrow you bid me renew," from the opening lines of *The Aeneid*'s second book.

To the gravamen, then, with which Costello belabors West-Stauff at the Amsterdam conference. To write so vividly (Paul West giving Stauff the German a helping hand with his English) is to poison both author and reader. Or so she claims. Some things simply must not be said. Now, which dictator hasn't said that? From memory, I recall Röttger, my book's hangman, as reeking of mothballs and celery (try it, you might like it), taunting the condemned with foul sexual and effluvial sneers. Is this worse than the actual Von Moltke's aristocratically telling them to strengthen their minds, as it takes twenty minutes to die on the rope? Given the chaste concinnity of that, or the feral gloat of Röttger, who cares? Moltke's warning includes the seed of its own remedy, and, anyway, some of the real-life condemned proved heroic to the end. This is w my novel is about. I doubt if the a gentle way of saying how the h man or hangmen treated scream women, but they did it, and I am sure the discreet version is any shocking than the hideous one. Th clutching at straws for decorum take heart from the German soldi refusal to watch the film of the h ings with Hitler. Only Herm Fegelein and junior SS kept him c pany, and when the film was tried on cadet audiences in Berlin, the fect on morale was so awful that most all copies were destroyed.

Confronted with the stuff of hi ry (say the brutal facts reported such a magazine as *Human Events* which you browse at your peril), novelist had better sample truth he can get at it, or quit. But to move such events from history i view a rosy world that, nonethe may just not exist.

Is Elizabeth Costello a literary p tan? She finds the literary depic of horror more gross than horro self, thus thwarting people's need ( obligation) to share. To make the ror even more visible may be the r scanted literary privilege. See Da

Of course, if it is not tortur sadism that unnerves her, then those things practiced by the univ without intermediary, as perceive most of us at our most realistic firming that we are all on death row we deny things as a matter of tast that what she intends? Or is it she, the celebrated burned-out no ist, hates the novel, or is just wear its inability to save us from death some poems might do? What re her perhaps is the indefatigable dustriousness of all the novelists ping keys, just to ram our noses things further? In other words, w ing the novel becomes a death's-h voodoo that improves our lot not jot but keeps the fingers busy?

I wish Coetzee the best of l worm in his beak. He emerges writer of plain English out of Bur by Swift, abetted by the Milto the pamphlets. Not bad. He is Joyce, though he does have his alted moments in and out of ti He did his Ph.D. at the Universit Texas, where Roger Shattuck c

ed. Is it the purple haze of ger scatology that Costello n't like? Why, I wonder, does ee take grateful aim at a young s war book and then, through twist of schadenfreude or re- ig, send a superannuated Aus- n literary lion to do the job, o fail at it? There may be a red ways of solving this puzzle, of which I mention later on, here is one component of his nce or his equivalent of Rom- beach obstacles, his so-called agus, that I must respond to. closest he gets to blame or tease, it was he who rigged this whole ture, is when he has Costello West, the real and actual factu- *est*, in the auditorium reading a ic book. One commentator, d Lodge, calls this "a startling gression of literary protocol." is having her spot me at my slum- , is it Boer humor? I read the taunt oke, but my friends know that it d almost certainly be an aviation zine, probably *Flying*. After some books, one needs a breath of air, gh not a prod in the ribs from an ie. Legally, Coetzee would not been allowed to write that Costel- w me, say, crouching at the urinal hs in order to lick the bellies of the flies that cluster there. Remem- *Drosophila melanogaster*—the black- ed dew-lover?

## II.

All that said, and put aside, we now have to wonder, along with many other appraisers, t kind of beast this "novel" is, and wn contribution, based on various les or manners or the writing, is it is Coetzee trying to compose xperimental work, even if, say, it s back to Nashe's *The Unfortunate veler* (1594) or *The Paston Letters* ne 1,100 letters and other docu- its from the prosperous Pastons of folk, England, covering business family affairs for three generations 1422 to 1509). If you like, fairly isticated pre-literature in which, out losing grace, one might blurt, nble, shout, go slightly bonkers. s say, literature disheveled or in- ate. I see no reason why an expa- e South African should not dabble in this stuff, since he already proffers the main body of his rather miscellaneous text as lessons or object lessons, didactic as all get-out yet a little mystifying too, as if a virginal, rumor-stewing monk had had some part in their fabrication. Indeed, I am not sure that as British fiction, having failed to achieve the expressionist novel, scouts around for something new, something very old might not come to hand, say the Paston, Cely, or Stonor letters.

I call it British fiction, as that seems to be the model for South African practitioners, rather than anything emanating from Black Africa or New York. Coetzee looks back to Daniel Defoe, for instance, not to Dreiser or Barthelme, and he's none the worse for it. If experimental writing, so called, is really an attempt to seek out the ancient mother (*antiquam exquirite matrem*) of writing, then Coetzee, knowingly or not, is into a juicy disinterment. Two of his so-called Lessons have been published previously as the Tanner lectures (delivered at Princeton), and their effect in this volume is to reinforce the scholarly or academic atmosphere, the veiled didactic side of things.

Such, then, might be the pith of what he's doing. I would go further, however, and suggest that somehow he caught a whiff of the French *chosiste* novel, which at the hands of so varied a crew as Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, and others created a mode of writing that dealt in adroit, copious mystification, now perhaps a bit passé but nonetheless estimable and bold. Elizabeth Costello, prating on realism, like, as her son, John, thinks, "an old, tired circus seal," drifts as a specimen into John's prose, which to my ear has a distinctly French New Novel tone and aim, as in:

> She has washed her hair and brushed it back. It still looks greasy, but honourably greasy, like a navvy's or a mechanic's. Already on her face the passive look that, if you saw it in a young girl, you would call withdrawn. A face without personality, the kind that photographers have to work on to lend distinction. Like Keats, he thinks, the great advocate of *blank receptiveness*.
>
> The blue costume, the greasy hair, are details, *signs of a moderate realism*. Supply the particulars, allow the signi-



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fications to emerge of themsel[illegible] A procedure pioneered by Daniel Defoe Robinson Crusoe, cast up on the beach, looks around for his shipmates But there are none. "I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them," says he, "except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows." Two shoes, not fellows: by not being fellows, the *shoes have ceased to be footwear* and become proofs of death, torn by the foaming seas off the feet of drowning men and tossed ashore. *No large words, no despair,* just hats and caps and shoes. . . .

Now *the scene has changed*. He has grown up. He is no longer outside the door but inside, *observing her* as she sits, back to the window, confronting, day after day, year after year, while her hair slowly goes from black to grey, *the blank page*. What doggedness . . . [*italics mine*]

The same things come off this passage, even if you do not linger on it, as came off those progenitors of the French New Novel: the unheroic delights of mere spectatorship, the intrusion of one closely inspected phenomenon into another, the sense of being alone in front of some inexhaustible object of contemplation, the joys of detailed obfuscation. (How alert of Coetzee to detect this "procedure" in Defoe; I had thought it began with Keats and ran on to De Quincey, and thus to Robbe-Grillet.) Above all there is the sense that some absolute of a scene changer is at work, confounding the meek observer, reminding him or her that nothing in the world is not derivative. On this showing, Coetzee is intellectually in top form, a mind mulling itself over and rejoicing in extraordinary finds. I think he may go on to discover, as Byron did, after watching public hangings with opera glasses, how soon everything becomes indifferent, by which Byron means unsurprising, the root idea behind the Byronic notion that a true sophisticate is one whom nothing surprises. Certain images current in the unsurprising familiarity of things have to be made severer, more arresting, if they are to have any impact. Such a thought may lead even novelists to a new expressionism that describes a thing not by how it looks but by how one feels about it. No doubt this is why Coetzee shops across genres, mixing lecture with narrative, dialogue with polemic, myth with gossip, lesson with erotics, *Salmagundi* offprint with spontaneous aperçu.

## III.

Some afterthoughts came my way when this magazine sent me a couple of offprints, the first a 2003 essay by Joseph Frank about an actual colloquium on evil at which Coetzee was the keynote speaker. Slated to speak about Dostoevsky, he instead read a sketch, an early draft of Lesson 6, composed by a novelist called Costello. Nothing much in Frank's essay beyond a lot of recycled golden oldies about the Russian, but in the lesson itself there comes a point at which the discussion gets serious, and Ms. Costello asks where *West* could possibly have got his material. There are two answers, the first being from that classic work, Peter Hoffmann's *The History of the German Resistance, 1933–1945*, from which we learn such details as "very bright filming lamps, film camera with two operators, on a small table a bottle of cognac with glasses, short thin cord, slow strangling, the executed completely nude, filming without interruption." One of the condemned, Hoffmann says, was compelled to watch three executions before his own. The second answer is: from one's own imagination, as befits a novelist.

Oddly, Joseph Frank seems to think *I* am a wholly fictional novelist trumped up by Costello, prompting me to say that I have a fecund imagination and a perfect right to use it. An old party trick of mine is to write novelists' names on paper and ask self-styled readers to name the authors in whose works they appear: Maurice Blanchot, Ernst Jünger, Georg Konràd, Jorge Edwards, Witold Gombrowicz, Juan Goytisolo. The results are appalling. The ill-read have become the unread, and I, finding myself made mythic, begin to have an entirely imaginary career.

The downward swerve of literary culture both here and abroad owes a great deal to finicky literary editors replacing good ones, publishers who insist on what the Brits used to call "railway reading," the cult of art[illegible] entertainment, the notion tha[illegible] grammatical text is a work of art, uselessness of high schools, [illegible] wimpish feebleness of university [illegible] ricula, and the general dread of [illegible] manding reading.

One response to this aesthe[illegible] decadence (in the publishing worl[illegible] follows the moral decadence [illegible] greed) is for the serious writer to [illegible] ercise his or her freedoms more for[illegible] fully: for instance, not only pick[illegible] up the stink of mothballs and cel[illegible] from the hangman but also track [illegible] him home to sausages and dumplin[illegible] cuddly kiddies and torpid *Frau*. A[illegible] his habit of talking back to the ne[illegible] paper. And the split heels from [illegible] diabetes. To pile on the detail is o[illegible] to summon down to earth the visi[illegible] of complexity, of contraries, in wh[illegible] humans abound. Readers who clea[illegible] separate Good from Evil have m[illegible] trouble when confronting the m[illegible] dled monster of the individual. A[illegible] who, if not the novelist or the bi[illegible] rapher, is to educate the race ab[illegible] its fearful asymmetries?

The second offprint is a 1986 es[illegible] from *The New York Times Book [illegible] view* by Coetzee, "Into the Da[illegible] Chamber: The Novelist and Sou[illegible] Africa," in which Coetzee depicts [illegible] novelist as excluded from the tort[illegible] chamber and therefore obliged [illegible] imagine what goes on in there. [illegible] mentions the indignant work of s[illegible] eral South African novelists [illegible] strikes deep when he speaks of cru[illegible] ty out of control, implying not o[illegible] the control of the torturers but a[illegible] the writer's sense that imagination [illegible] self gets out of control as well, to [illegible] extent that the imaginer begins [illegible] relish his own impromptus. Beyo[illegible] that lies a satanic limbo in which, [illegible] Costello maintains, the artist [illegible] comes a sadist, follows Sade, a[illegible] then it's up to the artist (or the c[illegible] ics) to separate the mauve glories [illegible] pain from the lip-smacking of c[illegible] scienceless brutes. Coetzee in t[illegible] vein is fascinating, because he kno[illegible] how to relate the novels of Monga[illegible] Serote, Alex La Guma, and Nadu[illegible] Gordimer to what he calls "the am[illegible] of moral judgment."

*Continued on page*

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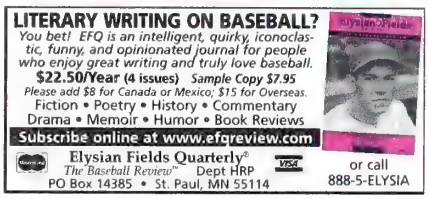
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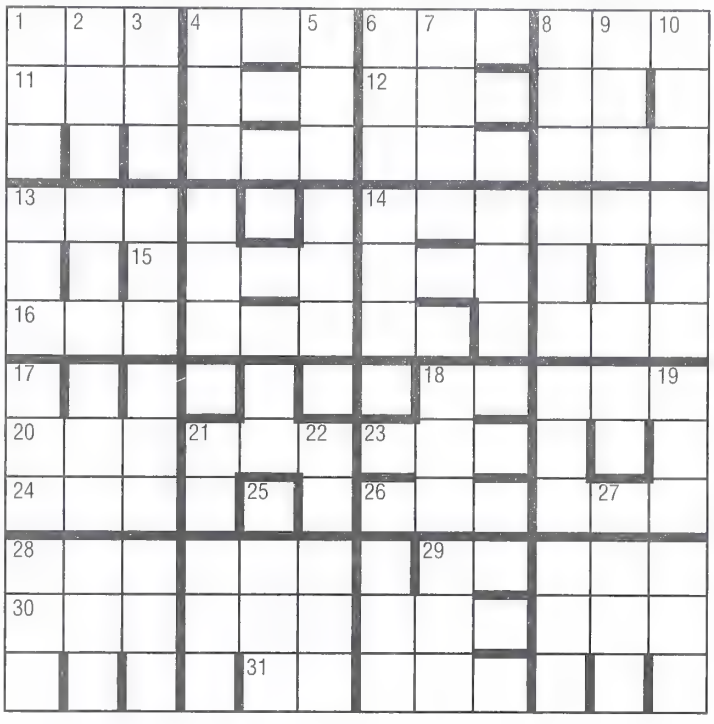
*Continued from page 92*

For my money, though, as I e... the arena of myth after life as a ... paying novelist, we have all only ... scraped the surface of what m... seem a horrendous problem: star... out to denounce horror, yet, in ... end, accepting it for its own s... because it further reveals the un... license of human creative power. ... matter how gross the outcome ... will be better to paddle around i... dark miasma than to ban it. So l... as men are vile, so can art be ... and maybe even after.

### July Index Sources

**1** ACLU (N.Y.C.); **2** Raba Technol... LLC (Columbia, Md.); **3,4** National C... ference of State Legislatures (Denver); ... RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident D... base (Oklahoma City); **7** Internati... Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting C... tre (Kuala Lumpur); **8,9** Multinationa... terim Force (Port-au-Prince); **10** U.S. ... partment of Labor; **11,12** Overseas Pri... Investment Corporation (Washingt... **13** General Accounting Office (W... ington); **14** Teamsters for a Democ... Union (Detroit); **15** The National C... cil for Research on Women (N.Y.... **16,17** U.S. Small Business Adminis... tion; **18** Minnesota Senior Federation ... Paul); **19** IMS Health (London); **20** ... Bureau of Labor Statistics; **21** Georg... Marshall Foundation (Lexington, Va.) ... U.S. Congressional Budget Office/U... Census Bureau; **23** Coalition Press In... mation Center (Baghdad); **24,25** M... agement & Training Corporation (C... terville, Utah); **26** *Harper's* research ... General Electric (Fairfield, Conn.); ... ENCO Systems, Inc. (Southfield, Mic... **29** iTunes Music Store (Cupert... Calif.)/*Harper's* research; **30** Mattel, ... (El Segundo, Calif.); **31** The Chris... Film and Television Commission (... marillo, Calif.); **32** "Back to the Fut... Smoking in Movies in 2002 Compared ... 1950 Levels," by Stanton A. Glantz, Ph... Karen W. Kacirk, and Charles McCull... Ph.D., February 2004: *American Journ... Public Health*; **33** Prof. Matt Fraser, ... University (Houston); **34** McDonald's C... poration (Oak Brook, Ill.); **35** Prof. Ma... Warren, University of London; **36,37** J... Komlos, Ludwig-Maximilians-Univers... München (Munich); **38** Jarvis Hotels ... (High Wycombe, England); **39** Comit... la grenouille (Vittel, France).

# PUZZLE



## Crazy Quilt

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*
*(with acknowledgments to Albipedius of* The Listener)

Entries begin at their appropriate numbers and run across or down as usual. However, when a heavy grid line is reached (grid lines intersect the puzzle every three spaces), the answer may be displaced by one line (Across entries) or one column (Down entries) until a further grid line is reached, and so forth. All entries are displaced at least once.

Answers include five proper names. 25D is an obscure word. 27D is a variant. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 75.

ACROSS

1. Son moved to guffaw by Pater's heart attack (9)
11. Eating disorder (11)
12. Small bird dog heading off on tail of pheasant (6)
13. Bird noises around part of the house (6)
14. I got into playing Viola (Shakespearean heroine) (6)
15. Butch keeps energy bottled up in spite (6)
16. Working twice as hard over land, having one's end in sight! (12)
18. Front of garden planted in mom's hot flower! (5)
20. Defacing Tinkerbell's light . . . (4)
23. . . . Ritchard and others blow lyrics (6)
24. Pitcher producing (perhaps) balls, go swing bats (12)
28. Crack hemp, highest level grade—for stress (9)
29. Eastern immigrant is coming and going around Europe (5)
30. Once more do business in old car enclosure (6)
31. I'm on a car, possibly in tubes (8)

DOWN

1. Preachy, go on rambling about a source of deep thinking! (12)
2. U.S. Military figure satellite will rise over North Carolina (6)
3. Wow some Alabamans who enjoy drifting? (12)
4. Streamlined state to draw in S.S. (8)
5. Wide-mouthed crockery is too broad (4)
6. Quietly urging tossing a ball (7)
7. Island for one—flip your lid over it (6)
8. Look good in vinyl, with letters exchanged at the end with tenderness (8)
9. Cryptic puzzle game, in being deciphered (6)
10. Railroad hasn't one special purpose—send it off! (12)
14. Eye part in dog leash (4)
17. Sack male-type employees in numbers (6)
18. Short-sighted copy I'm re-editing (6)
19. Like: hide information? (6)
21. Indian in the Army has record for being in the sauce (5)
22. Fish locked in amber (5)
25. Handle article on South America (4)
26. She got half a zillion upset! (4)
27. Sponsorship, for example, one's underwritten (4)

Contest Rules: Send completed diagram with name and address to "Crazy Quilt," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by July 14. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the September issue. Winners of the May puzzle, "Getting Your Bearings," are Lieselotte Hofmann, Santa Rosa, California; Kevin B. Robinson, New York, New York; and Rajiv K. Seth, Davis, California.







# FINDINGS

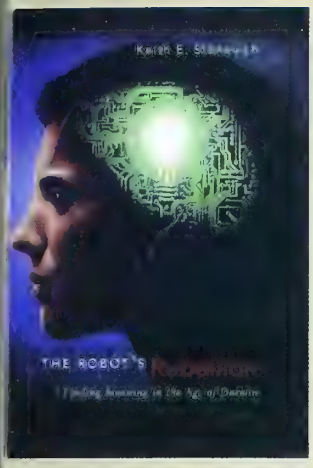
Scientists reported that the amount of sunshine that reaches the surface of the earth has dropped significantly in the last fifty years because of air pollution, with some areas experiencing a reduction of up to 37 percent. The phenomenon, known as global dimming, was first noticed twenty years ago but was dismissed as being impossible. Astronomers were surprised to discover that the Milky Way galaxy has an additional arm along its outer edge. New research suggested that the solar wind will protect the planet when the earth's magnetic field switches polarity; previously, scientists feared that the solar wind would damage the atmosphere during periods of magnetic weakness. Recent satellite measurements found that sea levels are rising faster near the shore than in mid-ocean, and Australia announced plans to ban fishing from one third of the Great Barrier Reef, which is expected to lose 95 percent of its living coral by 2050. Scientists were concerned about the large quantities of microscopic plastic particles floating around in the ocean. A long-term study of children in the Faroe Islands found that eating seafood that contains mercury causes heart and brain damage in older children and not just in babies; the study also concluded that mercury poisoning is irreversible. The United States Army and the DuPont Company were planning to dispose of 1,200 tons of VX nerve gas by mixing it with sodium hydroxide and hot water and then dumping it into the Delaware River in New Jersey.

Researchers at the National Museum of Natural History discovered that a kind of bird-biting mosquito has crossbred with one that prefers humans, a development that might have aided the rapid spread of the West Nile virus across the United States. A piranha was found in a petting zoo aquarium in Berlin. Environmentalists said that the Sumatran tiger is nearly extinct, and conservationists warned that Britain's birds and butterflies are dying out. The world's first transgenic bull died at age thirteen; the bull's name was Herman, and he possessed the human gene for lactoferrin, an important protein. A scientist in New York speculated that the parasitic bacteria that invaded early cells and eventually became mitochondria were responsible for the evolution of sex. Researchers in Michigan found that sperm inject RNA as well as DNA into eggs at fertilization, which could explain why cloning, which does not involve sperm, is so difficult. Japanese scientists created a mouse that is the daughter of two female parents, with no male input. Scientists at SeaWorld succeeded in artificially inseminating a killer whale, and researchers at the Kyoto Institute of Technology discovered that dandruff helps dolphins swim faster.

A type of nanocomputer made of DNA was unveiled that scientists speculated could someday diagnose and treat diseases from inside infected cells. According to nanotechnologists, self-assembling nanotubes could be used to make better joints. Researchers in Texas came up with a drug that cuts off the blood to white fat tissue; mice that were given the drug lost 30 percent of their body weight in four weeks. Fat stem cells were taken from a rat's belly and used to heal a fractured skull. A study found that removing soft drinks from schools helps reduce obesity among children. Scientists discovered a molecule, used by some cancer tumors, that prevents cells from dying. A substance in turmeric was found to help fight cystic fibrosis. Psychologists concluded that purebred dogs resemble their owners but that mutts do not. Teenage lesbians smoke too much, a study found, and sociologists determined that teenagers who vow to remain virgins are almost as likely to catch a venereal disease as normal teens. Hungarian researchers announced that women tend to marry men who look like their fathers, and a British study suggested that high fetal testosterone levels lead to social incompetence later on in life. Scientists said that women with large breasts and narrow waists are especially fertile, and that women look best once a month, when they're most fertile. Scientists discovered that mammals living in colder climates benefit from having a large penis. ■

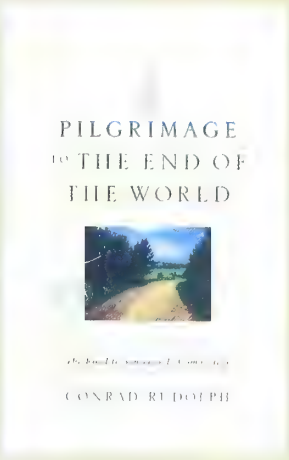
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*A Forum with Ron D. Daniels, Eric Foner, Ralph Nader, Kevin Phillips, and Frances Fox Piven*

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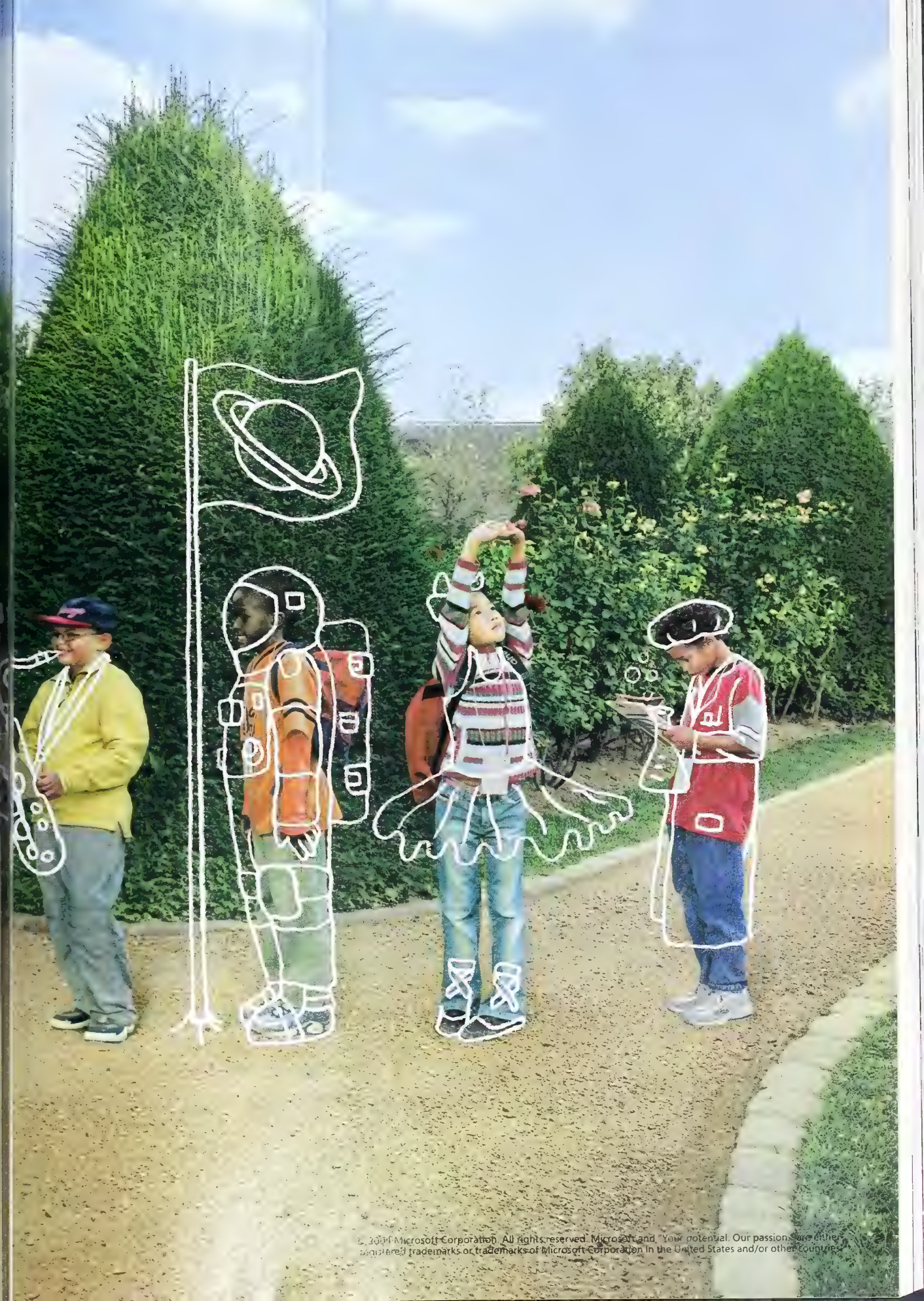
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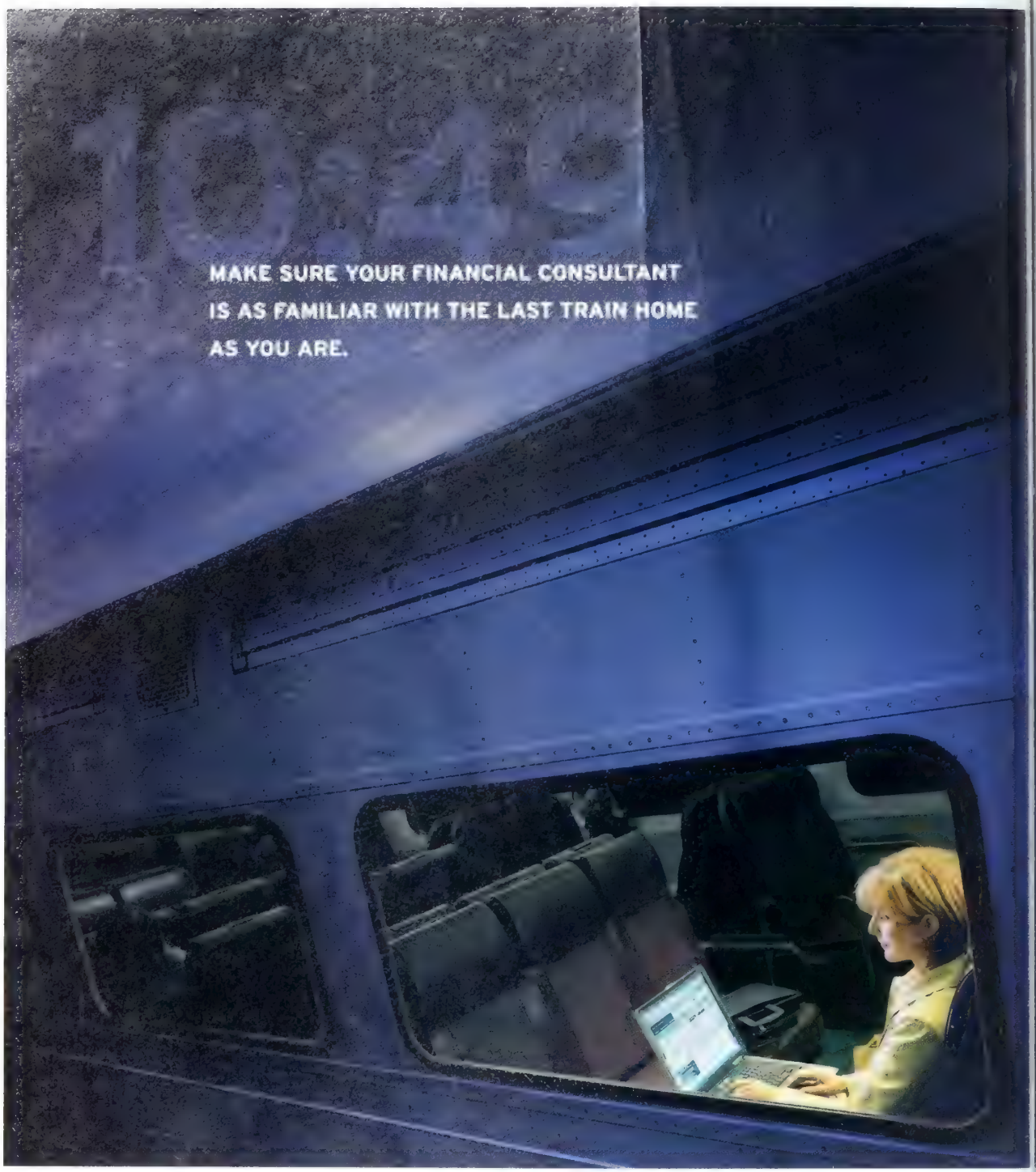
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*Cover by Tullio Pericoli*


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# LETTERS

## A Crisis of Philosophy

Earl Shorris's analysis of Straussianism ["Ignoble Liars," Criticism, June] overlooks the movement's main goal, which is to place science and technology under political control. This theme unites Paul Wolfowitz's war for selective disarmament with the efforts of Leon Kass, chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, to restrict stem-cell research.

The academic post Leo Strauss held before his death was named for the American philosopher Scott Buchanan, who ominously summarized these issues in 1953:

> [illegible] to wait until several wars have brought all research and production under government control. It would [illegible] accepted by a common consent.

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to proliferate indiscriminately, [illegible] eventually destroy liberal society.

[illegible]
San Francisco

Leo Strauss's acolytes, with t[illegible] delusions of power, have assumed [illegible] posts in the Bush Administrat[illegible] and the mounting evidence point[illegible] to a nefarious grand design is imp[illegible] sible to ignore. On one side, Pr[illegible] dent Bush is counseled by [illegible] Straussians (Wolfowitz, Perle, Fe[illegible] and Cambone), who flaunt their [illegible] gerous elitist arrogance and mend[illegible] ty derived from Plato and distilled [illegible] Nietzsche. On the other, Bush is [illegible] fluenced by John Ashcroft, Tom [illegible] Lay, and those who share his fun[illegible] mentalist adherence to the Book [illegible] Revelation's prophecy that Ch[illegible] will emerge only after nonbeliev[illegible] are gathered in the Holy Land a[illegible] converted—or struck down.

The Straussians and the end-ti[illegible] believers are using each other [illegible] achieve their separate, frighteni[illegible] agendas. If allowed to continue, th[illegible] will inevitably clash, but at what co[illegible] The toll in diminishing equality a[illegible] justice, to say nothing of human liv[illegible] is already devastating. The triumph[illegible] either the Straussians or the fun[illegible] mentalists would be equally reprehe[illegible] sible. Like Earl Shorris, I shudder [illegible] contemplate the potential cons[illegible] quences for our country and the wor[illegible]

[illegible]
Annapolis, Md.

ıo cares about Leo Strauss and
ıilosophy? Bush and his contin-
do not need an obscure philoso-
to justify their policies of rape
uin for profit. They are simply
nuing the conquest—of nature,
eaker" people, and of noncon-
ist elements—that has been a
ing quality of civilization. Ly-
hypocrisy, contradiction, elit-
contempt, ruthlessness? All par
ıe course.
American citizens, we should
a hard look at the very founda-
of our culture rather than blame
ctions of the current administra-
on a dead academic drone.

*l Stein*
ago

ırl Shorris quotes Isaiah Berlin,
noted that "liberty for the
es is death to the lambs." The
ıans put it even more bluntly:
o *homini lupus*, or "man is wolf
an."
las, today's ascendant liars are
ing to reverse the Enlighten-
t's sense of noblesse oblige,
h has sought for centuries to lift
ıanity above the fearful jungles
arwin, Nietzsche, and Strauss.

*r Fedynsky*
ımbia, Md.

ush's declaration that he believes
d wants me to be President" has
ı revealed to be not simple ego-
ia or even a refreshed vision of
ocracy. His words project what
Shorris courageously concludes:
ıe Bush regime relies on faith
en it can and reason when it
t, not in the cause of peace or
ice but in the pursuit of power."

*lerick G. Rodgers*
tland, Ore.

ies and deception are but a small
son to resist the present adminis-
ion's policies. Missing from Earl
rris's "Ignoble Liars" was the
sh Administration's capacity to
st hopes and blight innocent lives
ts will to control and master the
nestic and international sphere.
e sowing of death and destruction
Afghanistan and Iraq, the annihi-
lation of personal rights at home and abroad, the rejection of democratic principles, and the alienation of our international colleagues should rain shame upon this regime. If we, as American citizens, do not resist, this will become a shame that we all bear.

*Richard M. Wright*
Lakewood, Colo.

## *Ars Brevis*

Accolades to Lance Esplund ["Imitation of Art," Reviews, May] for such a meticulous and eloquent critique, not just of the painter John Currin but of the contemporary "art world" that has praised and glorified Currin, among other painters who, regardless of artistry or depth, serve to satisfy our culture's myopic appetite for art.

When Esplund writes that Currin's "particular kind of knowing, which focuses on the surface of a painting over its substance, isn't really 'knowing' at all," he casts light on a larger problem—the problem of surfaces, which can prevent us from posing larger questions about what may be valuable when probed; and it can ennoble cultural and political powers, such as the Bush Administration, to veil acts of immorality, even violence, in a shifting display of smoke and mirrors.

Art, though not a purely political vehicle, possesses the power to both inspire reflection and create the means by which we see, and, consequently, live. It also retains the potential to transform lives and societies, for better or for worse.

When we exalt an art, like Currin's, that has not been sufficiently contemplated, or that lacks a mystery, we risk placing ourselves not just in intellectual banality but in grave political danger.

*Leslie Dutcher*
New York City

## Mission Impossible?

I was offended by Thomas Frank's characterization of Mission Hills, Kansas, as the home of "thieves, embezzlers, tax evaders, real-estate frauds, and check forgers" ["Lie Down for America," Essay, April]. The residents I know are honest, hard-working, polite, straightforward, and generous. They are mostly professionals—doctors, lawyers, and consultants—but there are also small-business owners, corporate executives, and retirees who enjoy living in a beautiful, well-maintained, safe community. Frank seems to suggest that the quality of life we enjoy is somehow immoral and un-American.

I ask Frank: What American does not aspire to live in the nicest community possible? What American parents do not put their children in the best schools and the safest environments they can find? What American does not seek advancement in his or her chosen profession?

If it is now a crime to pursue the American dream, then I suppose the residents of Mission Hills are guilty as charged.

*David J. Fromm*
Mayor
Mission Hills, Kans.

*Thomas Frank responds:*

I stand by what I wrote, and if necessary I can furnish the mayor with an example of each species of criminal listed above, along with documentation of their deeds from local newspaper stories published in the last thirty-four years.

In saying that there are many white-collar criminals who have lived in Mission Hills, however, I obviously did not mean to imply that everyone living in Mission Hills is a white-collar criminal or that it is an ugly or unsafe place. On the contrary, in my book *What's the Matter with Kansas?* I describe Mission Hills as a kind of suburban heaven on earth, as "one of the perfect regional arcadias of American capitalism, a place more like the grounds of Versailles than the average postwar suburb."

That such a fine place is also home to many of the executives behind the local corporate shenanigans of recent years simply illustrates the screwy way our society doles out its highest rewards.

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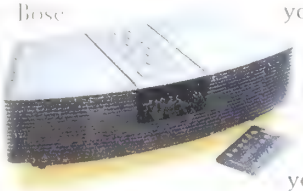



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# NOTEBOOK

## Bedtime for Bonzo

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*falo Bill's*
*nct*
*who used to*
*ride a watersmooth-silver*
*stallion*
*break onetwothreefourfive*
*igeonsjustlikethat*
*Jesus*
*was a handsome man*
*and what I want to know is*
*you like your blueeyed boy*
*ter Death*

—e e cummings

The news media loved Ronald agan almost as much as they love mselves, and so in early June it s not always easy to distinguish e funeral arrangements for an erican president from an Acade- Award presentation to an Amer- n matinee idol. For seven days d seven nights the sequence of nts billed by the *Washington Post* an "exquisite American ritual of urning" followed the voluminous ipt written by Ron and Nancy in 81, the year in which they made eir debut on the White House ge. No production value was left chance, no fond remembrance un- ploited or unrehearsed, the crowd nes up to the standards of Cecil DeMille—many choirs singing he Battle Hymn of the Republic" d "America the Beautiful," the fre- ent firing of twenty-one-gun ar- lery salutes, a handsome proces- n of grieving celebrities (among em Mikhail Gorbachev, the ince of Wales, and Merv Griffin), sket volleys and muffled drums, a lerless black horse walking behind the cortege on Constitution Avenue, the flag-draped casket placed under the Capitol Dome on the same catafalque that in 1865 had borne the body of Abraham Lincoln, eulogies delivered in the National Cathedral by President George W. Bush and Baroness Margaret Thatcher, the burial service timed to the setting of the California sun.

As swell a Hollywood ending as anybody had seen since the sinking of the *Titanic*, and despite a few complaints from overly exacting critics—no cameo appearance by Charlton Heston, the absence of covered wagons, nothing from Liza Minnelli or Ariel Sharon—the representatives of the national news media pronounced the music "glorious," the military uniforms "brilliant," the camera angles "heart-tugging." The cable networks broadcast continuous highlight reels of Mr. Reagan's finest speeches and bravest moments—at Omaha Beach and the Berlin Wall, at the entrance of Washington's Hilton Hotel on the day that he was shot, taking flak with Errol Flynn on a bombing run over Nazi Germany. In the print media the panegyric was nonpartisan, as effusive in the *New York Times* ("old-time values," "soaring farewells") as in the *New York Post* ("poignant and stirring"). Nobody of any consequence in the press gallery doubted that a man as great as Thomas Jefferson had departed on the path to glory, but sometimes it was hard to know where they thought he had gone. Tom Brokaw and the editors of *Time* magazine inclined to the view that he was standing tall somewhere in ancient marble next to a statue of Moses or Julius Caesar. *Newsweek* updated the legend of King Arthur, and for the presumably desolate readers of the *Wall Street Journal*, Peggy Noonan envisioned the president entering at the Gates of Heaven, once again a young man clear of mind and strong in body, turning for a goodbye glance at the live oak trees on the hills of Simi Valley and "snapping one of those little salutes" that had so endeared him to the promoters of the junk-bond market and the beneficiaries of the savings-and-loan swindle. "I imagine saluting right back," she wrote. "Do you?"

In point of fact, no. Nor has it ever occurred to me to salute Tom Hanks for saving Private Ryan. Mr. Reagan's interpretation of a five-star general I thought one of his least successful performances in a supporting role. I knew that he was trying for an effect reminiscent of Gregory Peck in *Twelve O'Clock High*, but somehow he managed to look like a too obsequious parking attendant at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. The salute was one of only a very few gestures that he didn't get right. He had a truly wonderful talent for the apt pose and the appropriate cliché, for projecting the "sunny fortitude" and "unflagging optimism" so often mentioned by the mourners at his bier.

Mr. Reagan's admiring biographers assign him a force of intellect and complexity of character unseen behind the mask of glib insouciance, but although I don't question the diligence of their research or the rosy flush of their enthusiasm, I've also read best-selling books that present Napoleon as a model

Lincoln, Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson as a medieval saint. Never having acquired access either to Mr. Reagan's White House or to the higher-ranking functionaries within his administration (138 of them convicted, indicted, or investigated for criminal misconduct), I knew the man only by those of his words and deeds that were available to the newspapers and to the television cameras during his eight years in office (i.e., in his capacity as president), and well before Dan Rather had shed his last tear and the last flag had been folded over the memory of "The Great Communicator" on June 11, I found myself imagining, in place of the salute, a somewhat differently toned film montage that recalled to mind the politician in whom I had seen the embodiment of false sentiment and bad faith—Mr. and Mrs. Reagan at the inauguration ball, seated comfortably in plush armchairs as if on overstuffed thrones, attended by the flatteries of Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope, bestowing the patronage of their indulgent smiles on the Step 'n Fetchit routine performed by a comedian in the costume of a dim-witted Negro minstrel; Mr. Reagan on a Republican fund-raising platform saying that nuclear wars were "winnable" and that homeless people were "homeless by choice"; a heartfelt eulogy from Saddam Hussein (supplied by the Reagan Administration with chemical weapons of mass destruction); Mr. Reagan informing a Washington press conference that the junta of murderous thugs in Nicaragua deserved to be appreciated as "the moral equivalent of the founding fathers"; testimonials both stirring and poignant from one or more of the big-ticket corporate thieves who welcomed the Reagan Administration's revision of the tax laws and federal regulatory codes as a heaven-sent chance to rob the American government and plunder the American citizenry.

During the 1980 election campaign Mr. Reagan made no secret of his allegiance to what the historian Richard Hofstadter once called "a democracy of cupidity rather than a democracy of fraternity," and it wasn't as if he promised a rose garden to anybody who couldn't afford the price of a Mexican gardener. He was an accommodating man in the habit of deferring to his social and financial superiors, at ease in the latter's gossip and the company of scoundrels, his understanding of the principles of moral and economic laissez-faire formed during his novitiate in Hollywood, where every year somebody one knew committed suicide or fraud, and the mob syndicates took their customary percentage of the distribution deals. But such was the way of the world, and what was a fellow to do about it? It was also true that every year the Rose Bowl parade renewed the miracle of flower arrangement, and Jerry Lewis raised another $10 million for children afflicted with muscular dystrophy. If an actor knew what was good for his career, he did his best with whatever scripts were offered him and didn't ask boring questions about where the studio raised the production money or how the director amused himself on Sunday afternoons in Malibu.

The complacent ethic worked to Mr. Reagan's advantage in Washington. He had been hired to read a script endorsing a popular product—the America portrayed in Norman Rockwell's paintings and the movies starring Jimmy Stewart—and when he wasn't saluting a Boy Scout troop or a nuclear submarine, he cast himself in the traditional American roles of the booster, the cockeyed optimist, the dealer in patent medicines, selling the folks at the fairgrounds the great good news that the United States would, "above all," continue to be a country "where someone always could get rich." For the sad problems that troubled Jimmy Carter (American hostages in Teheran, high rates of interest and inflation, the ruin of the nation's cities and the degradation of its natural environment) Mr. Reagan substituted happy problems—how to rig the stock market, when to build another aircraft carrier, where to hide a welfare mother. His wife, Nancy, anticipated the tone of his administration in an interview granted to the *London Observer* during the week prior to his election: "Ronald," she said, "really hates to have conflict around him. He doesn't want to have to get on the plane having to hold his stomach."

Which turned out to mean that Ronald didn't have much liking or patience either for the practice of democratic government, which breeds argument and therefore pain, or for tiresome concerns (decent health affordable education, a living of people unrepresented in Wa ton by an expensive law firm. The ident thought that poverty, like lessness, was voluntary, and h content to believe that anybod honestly objected to being poo free to go to California and there a fortune selling real or twelve-year-old gu

The Reagan Administratio rived in Washington firm in i solve to destroy the vestiges of Deal liberalism, to release corp enterprise from the prison of go ment restraint, to exchange the vate for the public good, and than once during its two terms i fice I was reminded of the re blance between the countercul uprising of the 1960s and the Re lican Risorgimento of the 198 two troupes of utopian anarchist lieving themselves entitled to than they already had, one of t refusing to grow up, the other d mined not to grow old. Prom under the rubric of a conserva awakening, the new attitude ea a *Good Housekeeping* seal of appr from the country's better busin men, who, at long last and a many years of being abused by lil intellectuals and badgered by a feminists, could once again sa public what in 1968 they had co ed only to their lawyers and t accountants. No longer was it ne sary to speak of money with em rassment or shame, as if afraid Bob Dylan and the flower child might be listening at the keyhol the bedroom door. If in the 196 had been impossible to trust anyb over thirty unless he or she smo pot and played guitar, in the 198 was impossible to trust anybody der thirty unless he or she was s ing in the Army. Orange County placed the Woodstock nation as railhead of regenerative crusade, the locus of the earthly parad moved from a commune in t White Mountains to a golf course Palm Springs. Greed was good a so were the comforts of a vac conscience; vanity a synonym

ge, selfishness another name for rectitude.

imated by the spirit of what was n both as "Reaganism" and as Me Decade," the agents and apos- f the new "morning in America" rued their victory at the polls as o d'état, and for eight years, as se- is Clint Eastwood in their knowl- of the good, the true, and the iful, they went about the task of nating numerous forms of gov- ent assistance (college loans as is food stamps), deregulating the s, the airlines, the prisons, and nancial industries, extending the of commercial monopoly, staffing ederal courts with judges suspi- of the Constitution but certain of faith in Jesus.

ıe Democratic Party offered small peeps of objection, and ıews media decorated the ball- s with red, white, and blue par- vors. It was thought that after isappointments of the 1970s (in nam and the basement of the te House) the country could l a little encouragement—some rful show tunes, a steady supply sy profits. In return for the as- ıce that America was still the of the free and the home of the e, why not humor the presi- 's fondness for claptrap economh- ıd geopolitical theory? "Facts," Reagan once said, "are stupid gs," and as long as the man was k with the one-line jokes and v when to strike up the band smile on the parade, why quarrel his occasional lapses of memory whereabouts of Poland, the es of his own Cabinet ministers) ith his winsome flights of fan- trees responsible for air pollu- , nuclear missiles recallable ıty minutes after launch, tomato hup a wholesome vegetable, S a punishment for sin.

he Saturday matinee audiences ısed Mr. Reagan's absurdities be- e they saw him as a movie star etimes tripped up, like any other ie star, by an alcoholic script- er or an incompetent astrologer. dialogue he borrowed from Hol- ood films of the 1930s and 1940s illed confidence rather than n; what mattered was the sweet ness of his actor's voice, the warmth of his winning smile, his ability to transform, at the drop of a hat or the turn of a phrase, the work of government into a play of words. Mr. Reagan wasn't interested in questions that couldn't be answered with an anecdote, and he appealed to people who were tired of worrying about what might be meant by the heavy and boring notions of freedom, truth, justice, the rule of law.

In death as in life, Mr. Reagan's performance matched the superlatives in the program notes prepared by the mythographers at *Time* magazine ("dreamer in chief") and the *Washington Post* ("a tasteful balance between loving and spirited remembrance of Reagan and the deep sorrow that his death evokes . . . we miss him so very, very much"). Applauding the spectacle of his funeral as joyously as they had applauded the romance of his presidency, the media also applauded themselves. They had changed the seriousness of politics into the stuff of trivial entertainment, and of a president they had made celebrity, a more valuable commodity and one matched to the weight of their own moral and intellectual insignificance. The Ronald Reagan story was easy to tell, shot through with melodrama and rich in photo opportunities, and at the moment of the hero's ascent to heaven, where, as Baroness Thatcher had said in the National Cathedral, he was sure to be welcomed by "the Big Fellow upstairs," why spoil it with the counting of the cost at which it had been purchased? Not once during the week of funeral services did any voice in the media choir loft take the trouble to reflect on the damage done both to the broad mass of the American people and to the American idea of government. Absent Mr. Reagan's success at the box office, and with it proof of the proposition that what was wanted in the White House was a fetching poster child, the country might have been spared the grim and farcical sequel of the current Bush Administration. Reagan at least had sense enough to know that he was an actor, hitting his marks, tipping his cap, milking the script for laughs; George W. Bush thinks the movie is real. ■




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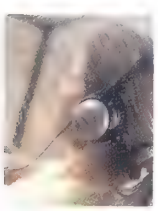
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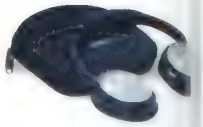
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# HARPER'S INDEX

Number of World Trade Centers under development worldwide since September 2001 : 26
Number of them that are in Saudi Arabia : 3
Chance that a member of New York's Army National Guard was in Iraq in June : 1 in 4
Chance that a member of Texas's Army National Guard was : 1 in 31
Percentage points by which the President's approval rating has fallen since September 2001 : 41
ercentage points by which his father's rating fell between the end of the Gulf War and August 1992 : 60 (see page 32)
Rank of Ronald Reagan among U.S. presidents since 1945 with the highest average approval rating while in office : 7
Approval rating of Lyndon Johnson in March 1968, the month he announced he would not run for reelection : 36
Year in which U.S. oil production peaked : 1971
Year in which worldwide oil discoveries did : 1964 (see page 71)
Estimated year in which Baghdadis first harnessed electricity, using clay pots lined with copper : 230 B.C.
Average megawattage of electricity generated in Iraq each day last year before the invasion : 4,500
Average megawattage generated there each day in June : 4,300
Maximum voltage New York City's main post office will deliver to pigeons during the Republican convention : 8,000
ds the *New York Times* devoted last May to examining its own faulty reporting on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction : 3,082
Words the *Times* devoted last year to "correcting the record" after an investigation of reporter Jayson Blair : 7,102
Minimum number of U.S. firms under contract in Iraq that have paid federal fines, settlements, or restitution since 2000 : 7
Amount they paid : $87,635,766
Minimum amount that Wal-Mart has received in subsidies from state and local governments since 1980 : $625,000,000
Number of the 73 firms participating in the Medicare discount drug program that have been investigated since 2000 : 20
Number of these that have paid fines in connection with criminal cases : 17
Percentage change since 1992 in the annual number of people murdered in the United States, per 100,000 : –40
Percentage change since then in the number of people serving a life sentence in a U.S. prison : +83
Number of years a judge ordered a man convicted of cocaine possession last spring to keep a coffin in his home : 6.5
Price a Chilean cemetery charges for an alarm built into coffins to ensure against mistaken live burial : $462
nimum number of developing countries whose adolescent birth rate is lower than that of Phillips County, Arkansas : 94
ance that an African national leader who left office between 1960 and 2003 did so because he lost an election : 1 in 10
Rank of Labour among British political parties that won the most votes in local elections in June : 3
Percentage of Britons who cannot name the city that provides the setting for the musical *Chicago* : 65
Average number of inches by which Chicago sinks each year as the land it stands on adjusts from the last ice age : 0.04
Average number of inches by which Churchill, Canada, rises each year for the same reason : 0.4
Average number of feet by which each boat ramp into Arizona's Lake Powell has been extended since 2002 : 600
atio of the number of cicada eggs per square mile of southern New Jersey to the number of stars in the Milky Way : 4:5
Credit a Barcelona nightclub offers with the purchase of its "VIP VeriChip" implant, in euros : 100
Number of implants the nightclub has sold this year : 12
Age of a handcuffed Tucson, Arizona, girl whom police shot with a Taser in May : 9
ate grant awarded a Missouri police department's Youth Outreach Unit two years ago to battle Goth culture : $273,000
Amount the Unit returned to the state in April after no Goth-influenced youth could be found to aid : $132,000
Amount spent in the interim to set up the program : $141,000

*Figures are the latest available as of June 2004. Sources are listed on page 42.*
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AN AMERICAN ALBUM

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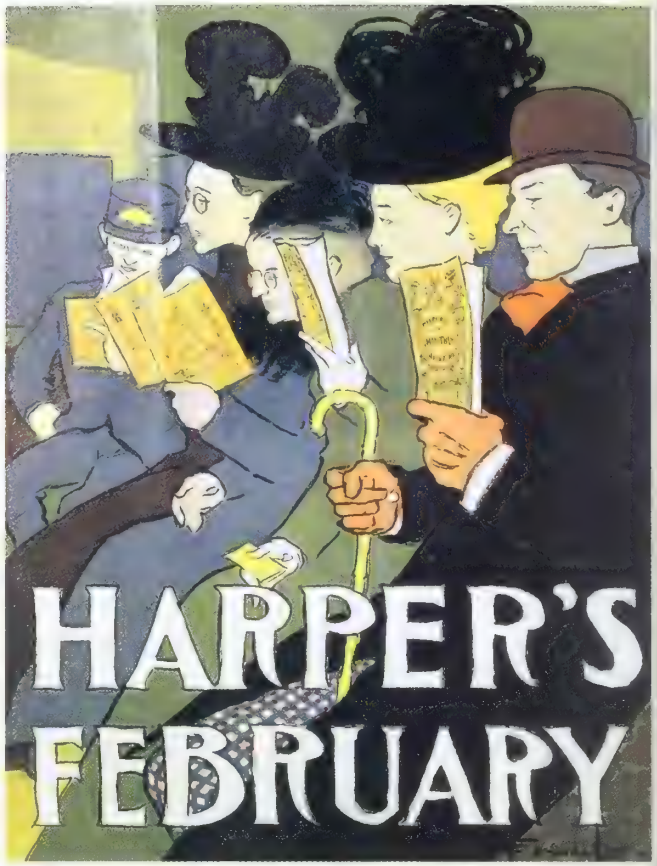
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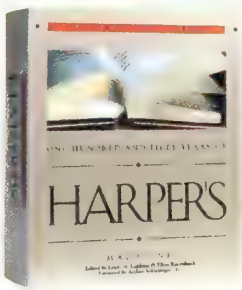
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# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE TYRANNY OF PETTY COERCION

*By Marilynne Robinson, from the Spring issue of* Social Research. *Robinson's novel,* Gilead, *will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in November.*

Courage seems to me to be dependent on cultural definition. By this I do not mean only that it is a word that blesses different behaviors in different cultures, though that is clearly true. I mean also, and more importantly, that courage is rarely expressed except where there is sufficient consensus to support it. Theologians used to write about a prevenient grace, which enables the soul to accept grace itself. Perhaps there must also be a prevenient courage to nerve one to be brave. It is we human beings who give one another permission to show courage, or, more typically, withhold such permission. We also internalize prohibitions, enforcing them on ourselves—prohibitions against, for example, expressing an honest doubt, or entertaining one. This ought not to be true in a civilization like ours, historically committed to valuing individual conscience and free expression. But it is.

Physical courage is remarkably widespread in this population. There seem always to be firefighters to deal with the most appalling conflagrations and doctors to deal with the most novel and alarming illnesses. It is by no means to undervalue courage of this kind to say it is perhaps expedited by being universally *recognized* as courage. Those who act on it can recognize the impulse and act confidently, even at the greatest risk to themselves.

Moral and intellectual courage are not in nearly so flourishing a state, even though the risks they entail—financial or professional disadvantage, ridicule, ostracism—are comparatively minor. I propose that these forms of courage suffer from the disadvantage of requiring new definitions continually, which must be generated out of individual perception and judgment. They threaten or violate loyalty, group identity, the sense of *comme il faut*. They are, intrinsically, outside the range of consensus.

Social comity is no doubt dependent on a degree of like-mindedness in a population. It does sometimes help when we are in general agreement about basic things. Indeed, consensus is so powerful and so effectively defended that I suspect it goes back to earliest humanity, when our tribes were small and vulnerable, and schism and defection were a threat to survival. But it should never be forgotten how much repression and violence consensus can support, or how many crimes it has justified.

It is true that in most times and places physical courage and moral and intellectual courage have tended to merge, since dungeons, galleys, and stakes have been extensively employed in discouraging divergent viewpoints. For this reason our own society, which employs only mild disincentives against them and in theory positively admires them, offers a valuable opportunity for the study of what I will call the conservation of consensus, that is, the effective enforcement of consensus in those many instances where neither rea-

penalties for challenging it that person of moderate brio would consider deterrents.

Let us say that the sort of courage I wish to consider can be defined as loyalty to truth. I am not entering any epistemological thicket. The kind of truth that is resistant of the ways sometimes represented in the statement "the house is on fire." It is consensus that conceals from us

jectively true. And it is consensus that d supports "truths" that are in fact culturally relative. And, interestingly, it is consensus served when the objective truth is disallowed on the grounds that "truth" is merely the shared understanding of a specific group or culture.

Here is an instance: for some time the word "bashing" has been used to derail criticism of many kinds, by treating as partisan or tendentious statements that are straightforwardly true or false. I say that the disparity between rich and poor in this country exceeds any previously known in American history (putting aside the marked economic disparity between plantation owners and slaves) is to say something falsifiable—that is, for practical purposes, verifiable, and in any case arguable. But such statements are now routinely called "Bush bashing." In other words, something that is objectively true or false is dismissed as the slur of a hostile subgroup. Perfectly sensible people flinch at the thought that they might sound a trifle Jacobin, and they are shamed out of saying what they believe to be true in the plainest sense of the word "true." Nor is it the critics alone who lose their bearings when these strategies are employed. Those who identify with the group toward whom the criticisms are directed—in this case, the present administration—can hear irrational attack where they might otherwise hear a challenge to their values or to their theories and methods.

So the exchanges that political life entirely depends on, in which people attempt in good conscience to establish practical truth and then candidly assign value to it, simply do not take place. This is a failure of courage on both sides. I assume many apologists for the administration would find it painful to say that radical economic polarization is a good thing. So they are relieved to learn that they are only being "bashed," and therefore need not consider the issue on its merits.

Why critics are so flummoxed I can only speculate. Perhaps it is because most of the people in this country who take on public issues are educated and middle class. As is true of their kind anywhere, they are acculturated to distrust strong emotion, so they are effectively rebuked when they are accused of harboring it. Oddly, they seem often to be shamed out of defending the poor and vulnerable on the grounds that they themselves are neither poor nor vulnerable, as if there were properly no abstract issues of justice, only the strategies of interest groups or, more precisely, of self-interest groups. That their education and experience prepare them to think in terms larger than their own immediate advantage makes them an "elite," and ipso facto they are regarded as a self-interested subgroup of a particularly irksome kind. Even when they benefit, materially, from the policies they deplore and wish to change, their position is dismissed as nothing

[Homage]

## LOOKING OUT FOR #1

*From an official North Korean news report on the April 22 train explosion believed to have killed at least 161 people and injured 1,300.*

The Korean people's spirit of guarding the leader with their very lives was fully displayed when there was an unexpected explosion at Ryongchon Railway Station in Ryongchon County, North Pyongan Province, on April 22.

Upon hearing the sound of the heavy explosion on their way home for lunch, Choe Yong-il and Jon Tong-sik, workers at the County Procurement Shop, ran back to the shop. They were buried under the collapsing building and died a heroic death when they were trying to come out with portraits of President Kim Il-sung and leader Kim Jong-il.

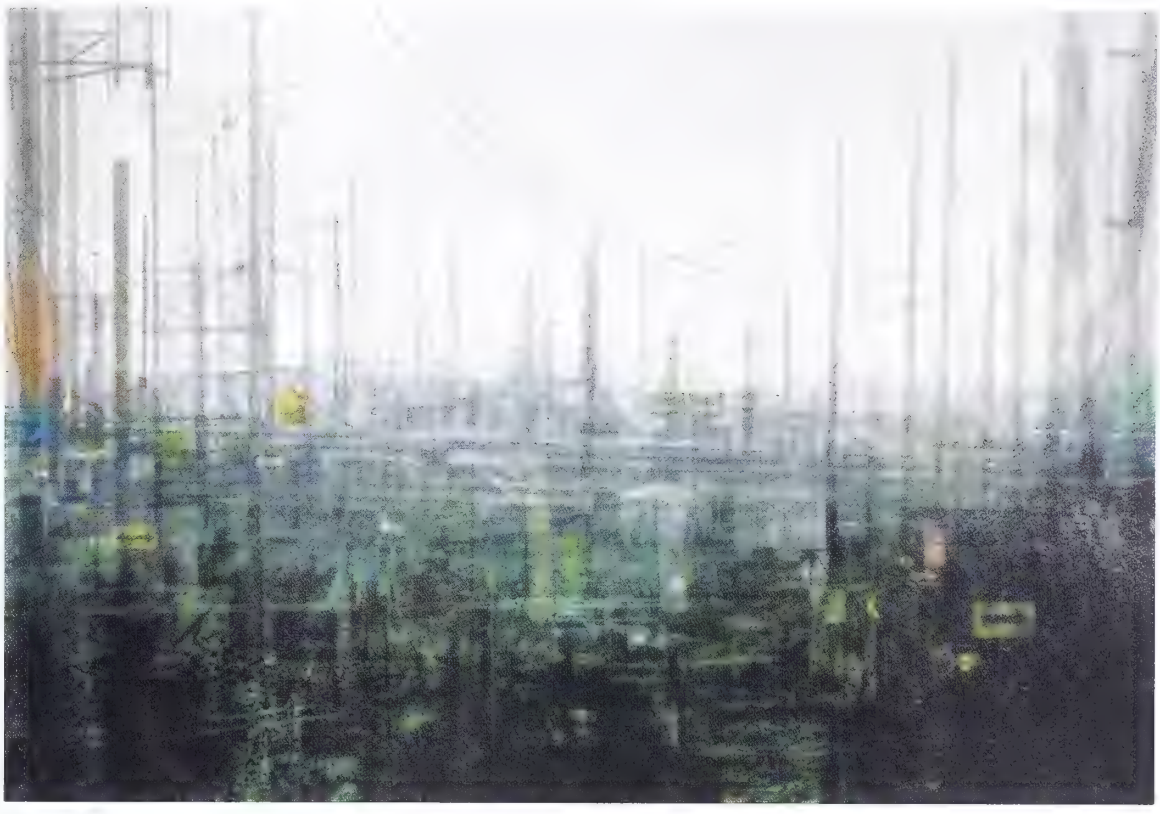
When the building of Ryongchon Primary School was destroyed by the violent blast and the classroom on the third floor caught fire, teacher Han Un-suk, thirty-two, also died after bringing portraits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il to a place of safety and saving seven pupils.

Teacher Han Jong-suk, fifty-six, also breathed her last with portraits in her bosom.

Principal of the school Choe Pyong-ryop and his son rushed to the accident scene and evacuated materials concerning the revolutionary ideas and immortal exploits of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il from the school, wrapped in fire.

Such a noble deed was also done by head of the county nursery Pak Sun-mi and seven nurses including Jang Yon-hui and Ri Pong-suk, and principal of Ryongchon Middle School, Kang Yong-su.

Many people of the county evacuated portraits before searching for their [illegible] or saving their household goods.



COURTESY THE PROGRESSIVE CORPORATION

Megalopolis, *by Daniel Dove. An exhibition of his work will be held in December at the Hiestand Galleries of Miami University, Ohio.*

more than elitist, though the pols and pollsters who use the term have identical credentials and much greater power. To be intimidated in this way is a failure of courage, and to abandon democracy from an excess of self-doubt and good manners is no different, in its effect, than to abandon it out of arrogance or greed.

I am myself a liberal. By that I mean I believe society exists to nurture and liberate the human spirit, and that large-mindedness and openhandedness are the means by which these things are to be accomplished. I am not ideological. By that I mean I believe opportunities of every kind should be seized upon to advance the well-being of people, especially in assuring them decent wages, free time, privacy, education, and health care, concerns essential to their full enfranchisement.

I am very critical of liberalism, not in principle but as a movement. This distinction seems never to be made, and it is not at all subtle. As a principle, liberalism is essential to the sanity and humanity of this civilization. As a movement, it is virtually defunct. Those who have espoused it have failed it, in a way and to a degree that has allowed the very word to become a term of opprobrium. Some authoritative consensus turned against it, and, obedient to that consensus, its allies have abandoned the cause, if not gone over to the other side, into the embrace of illiberalism. The oddness as well as the potency of this phenomenon is certainly to be seen in the capitulation of the Democratic Party in Congress to a president whose mandate to govern was so weak as to be nonexistent. These solons were cowed not so much by being out of power as by being out of style. Perhaps so honorable a thing as courage should not be named in such a context, even to describe its own absence.

In all fairness, the capitulation of liberalism to illiberalism (a word I use advisedly—there is nothing conservative about this new politics) occurred along the whole broad progressive front, not just in Congress. Suddenly people were avoiding the word, trying to find a new name for their political convictions and failing, in part because they were not quite sure what their convictions were, or if they ought to deal in politics at all. Best leave it to the cynics and the bullies.

It is sad to consider how much first-rate courage must be devoted in this world to struggling out of the toils of sheer pettiness. The Saudi women who first drove automobiles risked and suffered penalties, overcame inhibitions, and shattered norms, heroic in their defiance of

Parks. That such great courage should have been required to challenge such petty barriers is a demonstration of the power of social consensus. How many minor coercions are required to sustain similar customs and usages? How aware are any of us, absent direct challenge, of how we also deal in trivial coercion?

[Analogue]

## THIS ATROCITY THING

*From notes taken during a November 21, 1969, telephone conversation between National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird following the* Cleveland Plain Dealer*'s publication of photographs of the 1968 massacre by American soldiers of 347 civilians at My Lai, South Vietnam. Last May the State Department declassified 20,000 pages of Kissinger's telephone conversations, five years after the National Security Archive began legal proceedings demanding their release.*

K was calling about the atrocity case: the President wants to make sure L got a game plan. K said it was going to be a terrible mess. L asked if K had the pictures. K said no. L asked if K would like to look at them. K said should I? L said K might as well not. They're pretty terrible. L said it didn't happen on our watch and we're going to make that clear. L said some of the press wants us to give them out, but we're not going to. K said no, we don't want you to. L said about a game plan, he'd like to sweep the whole thing under the rug, but you can't do that. K said we just need some unified line. L said he's going to say that he discovered it in March; he was shocked; he ordered a full investigation. L said it would be released Monday or Tuesday. L said those boys had been suffering terribly; one of their boys had been killed just twenty-four hours before. L said you can understand a little bit of this, but you shouldn't kill that many. L said he didn't know what to do. L said we've got all kinds of problems with this atrocity thing, but we've got to be careful that we don't take on everybody on the Vietnam war thing. L has written up some notes, maybe K should see them. K said he would love to see them. L said it's the long term thing you have to look at. K said right, if you could let me see those notes, I basically agree with you.

This is a time when it actually requires a certain courage to declare oneself a liberal, even among presumptively like-minded people. That might seem a minor act after the instances I have just cited, in which people defied prejudice, custom, and law. But the purely arbitrary nature of this little coercion isolates the impulse to enforce consensus, even when absolutely nothing is at stake for the enforcers and the one subject to coercion risks no penalty—except the embarrassment of seeming not to know that a word is passé, that a posture is, well, as of now a little ridiculous. A great part of learning the argot of a peer group, which is a great part of claiming and assuming membership in it, is the self-editing that deletes disfavored language. All of us learn this skill in adolescence—learn it so well, perhaps, that we practice it unconsciously through life. This editing reaches deeper than mere language, and of course there is no such thing as mere language. The banishment of the word "liberal" was simultaneous with the collapse of liberalism itself. And however these events were related, the patient smile that precludes conversation on the subject means the matter is closed. To be shamed out of the use of a word is to make a more profound concession to opinion than is consistent with personal integrity. What is at stake? Our hope for a good community. Liberalism saw to the well-being of the vulnerable. Now that it has ebbed, the ranks of the vulnerable continuously swell. If this seems too great a claim to make for it, pick up a newspaper. Trivial failures of courage may seem minor enough in any particular instance, and yet they change history and society. They also change culture.

To illustrate this point, I will make a shocking statement: I am a Christian. This ought not to startle anyone. It is likely to be at least demographically true of an American of European ancestry. I have a strong attachment to the Scriptures, and to the theology, music, and art Christianity has inspired. My most inward thoughts and ponderings are formed by the narratives and traditions of Christianity. I expect them to engage me on my deathbed.

Over the years many a good soul has let me know by one means or another that this living out of the religious/ethical/aesthetic/intellectual tradition that is so essentially compelling to me is not, shall we say, cool. There are little jokes about being born again. There are little lectures about religion as a cheap cure for existential anxiety. Now, I do feel fairly confident that I know what religion is. I have spent decades informing myself about it, an advantage I can claim over any of my would-be rescuers. I am a mainline Protestant, a.k.a. a liber-

al Protestant, as these same people know. I do not by any means wear my religion on my sleeve. I am extremely reluctant to talk about it at all, chiefly because my belief does not readily reduce itself to simple statements.

Nevertheless, I experience these little coercions. Am I the last one to get the news that this religion that has so profoundly influenced world civilization over centuries has been ceded to the clods and the obscurantists? Don't I know that J. S. Bach and Martin Luther King have been entirely eclipsed by Jerry Falwell? The question has been put to me very directly: Am I not afraid to be associated with religious people? These nudges would have their coercive effect precisely *because* those who want to put me right know that I am not a fundamentalist. That is, I am to avoid association with religion completely or else be embarrassed by punitive association with beliefs I do not hold. What sense does that make? What good does it serve? I suspect it demonstrates the existence of a human herding instinct. After all, "egregious" means at root "outside the flock." There are always a great many people who are confident that they recognize deviation from group mores, and so they police the boundaries and round up the strays.

This is only one instance of a very pervasive phenomenon, a pressure toward concessions no one has a right to ask. These are concessions courage would refuse if it were once acknowledged that a minor and insidious fear is the prod that coaxes us toward conforming our lives, and even our thoughts, to norms that are effective markers of group identity precisely because they are shibboleths, a contemporary equivalent of using the correct fork. These signals of inclusion and exclusion, minor as they seem, have huge consequences historically because they are used to apportion the benefits and the burdens of collective life. The example of coercion I have offered, the standing invitation to sacrifice one's metaphysics to one's sense of *comme il faut*, has had the effect of marginalizing the liberal churches and elevating fundamentalism to the status of essential Christianity. The consequences of handing over the whole of Christianity to one momentarily influential fringe is clearly borne out in the silencing of social criticism and the collapse of social reform, both traditionally championed by American mainline churches, as no one seems any longer to remember.

The present dominance of aspersion and ridicule in American public life is a reflex of the fact that we are assumed to want, and in many cases perhaps do want, attitude much more than information. If an unhealthy percentage of the population gets its news from Jay Leno or Rush Limbaugh, it is because they are arbiters of attitude. They instruct viewers as to what, within their affinity groups, it is safe to say and cool to think. That is, they short-circuit the functions of individual judgment and obviate the exercise of individual conscience. So it is to a greater or lesser degree with the media in general. It is painful to watch decent and distinguished people struggle to function politically in this non-rational and valueless environment.

Finally, granting that consensus enforcement, and the endless small concessions made to endless small coercions, are no doubt universal in human civilization, they cannot be without cost, precisely because they disable courage. No one can truly submit to unreasonable coercion—by suppressing one's thinking, one's identity, one's metaphysics—without falling a little in one's own estimation. And no one can deal in coercion without cynicism. Both sides of the transaction compromise.

Cultures commonly employ the methods of cults, making their members subject and dependent. And nations at intervals march lockstep to enormity and disaster. A successful autocracy rests on the universal failure of individual courage. In a democracy, abdications of conscience are never trivial. They demoralize politics, debilitate candor, and disrupt thought.

[Transcripts]

## CALIFORNIA REAMIN'

*From recordings of conversations between Enron energy traders obtained by the Snohomish County, Washington, power utility in May. The conversations took place during California's 2000–2001 energy crisis, which saw wholesale energy prices rise by 490 percent while the state suffered regular blackouts and power shortages. Enron, formerly the world's largest energy trader, filed for bankruptcy in December 2001 after a series of accounting scandals and is currently under investigation by the Justice Department; charges have been brought against thirty former executives and associates for questionable trading and accounting practices. On June 3, California attorney general Bill Lockyer announced plans to sue Enron for manipulating California's electricity market during the crisis.*

TOM: Serious shit goin' on out in the West, man. Clinton steppin' in and stuff.
MATT: Oh, yeah, you see this shit? Fuckin' nutty, huh?
TOM: The price caps?
MATT: The price caps!
TOM: Fucking bullshit. It would take care of all



*Trial*, by Amy Cutler, was on display in June at Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects in New York City.

the weak. Get rid of 'em, and then you know what? The people who are strong and understand how it works will stick around and—and—no, prices aren't going to stay at a thousand bucks forever—

MATT: Right.

TOM: —but it will until the people get out who don't know what the hell they're doing.

MATT: Tell you what—you heard this here first: When Bush wins—

TOM: Caps are gone.

MATT: That fucking Clinton, he's fuck—all these fuckin' socialists are gone.

TOM: Yeah, and you know what? If you don't know what you're doing, you're fucked. See you.

MATT: Where'd you see that Clinton was, ah—

TOM: It just came out of Reuters: "Clinton Takes Steps to Ease California Power Crisis."

MATT: There's no crisis.

TOM: Fuck 'em, right?

MATT: We fuckin' export like a motherfucker.

TOM: You getting rich?

MATT: Tryin' to. I just, you know— You know what pissed me off so [illegible]—the fuckin' caps.

TOM: Oh, fuckin' A it does. It's just crap. It's completely crap. It—it just goes against everything our country's about.

MATT: I feel like we're in a Third World country. There's friggin' no—there's no free market. It's like a Third World country.

TOM: How can they do that? They can't do that, I don't think, really. They can also be sued. You can sue the fuckin' government. Fuck 'em.

MATT: Oh, shit, I gotta go into this meeting. So, anyway, see ya.

---

STEVE: This is Steve.

PAUL: Hey, man. So, everything is cool.

STEVE: Done, huh?

PAUL: This is a—a freak show. But this is where California breaks.

STEVE: Yeah, it sure does, man.

PAUL: Yeah. So, ah, what we need to do is to help in the cause of, ah, the downfall of California [*chuckles*], and economic decision-wise, you guys need to pull your megawatts out of California on a daily basis—

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: —whatever you have, and sell it in the bilateral market. Yeah, what I'll do is—let's get Tom on the phone—me, you, and Tom, or you and Tom, or whatever and just say, hey, ah, and sell the scraps into California, like five megawatts, two megawatts, that type of thing.
STEVE: Okay.
PAUL: Thanks, bye.

***

JEFF: Sonny. Start awaking, man.
DANE: Hey, sonny, what you doin'?
JEFF: Just calling you.
DANE: Sonny, you're such a good guy.
JEFF: Ah, you know how it is.
DANE: Sonny, I want to know how much money did you make last week when it got hotter than shit down here.
JEFF: Sonny, I just hope you had your air conditioner running thinking of me, baby.
DANE: I had it on full blast.
JEFF: All you fuckin' southern California people.
DANE: Well, I heard—I heard San Diego's pissed, because they're buyin' their electricity on the open market now and their electric rates doubled recently—right? Is that the problem?
JEFF: Yeah, well I—my problem is, is that they just don't know how to hedge themselves early on, so fuck 'em.
DANE: So are you making money off it or not?
JEFF: Oh, yeah.
DANE: Did you—did you sell off electricity at like some insane price last week?
JEFF: Yeah, 500 bucks.
DANE: Sweet, sonny. You were just rollin' in it?
JEFF: Oh, it was nice!
DANE: They just dumb-asses?
JEFF: Sonny, it's an auction, man.
DANE: So—well, what's wrong with people?
JEFF: Sonny, they're just dumb.
DANE: Sonny, you should figure how to do this with your own money.
JEFF: I'm tryin' to.

***

KEVIN: Robert.
ROBERT: [*laughing*] Kevin.
KEVIN: Oh, I can't handle it anymore.
ROBERT: I can't either, man. Yeah, it's unbelieva—businesses with these power prices and these fuckin', ah, gas prices, they can't do it. They can't—this is like a recession waiting to fuckin' happen and we don't even know what the fuck is going on.
KEVIN: There was a guy yesterday, he's—he's some consultant or whatever. He came in, he—and I didn't even meet the guy. I was sittin' here, and he's like, "Yeah, you know, I'm in California now and my energy costs have gone from 100 to 500 dollars a month. It's unbelievable. I don't know what to do." I just turned from my desk; I just looked at him, I said, "MOVE." I go, "Look, don't take it the wrong way: Move. It isn't getting fixed anytime soon."
ROBERT: You know, man, it's unbelievable, it's like that's the best thing about it. That's so beautiful.
KEVIN: I just fuckin' laugh.
ROBERT: What else can you do, man?
KEVIN: I don't know. There's nothin' I can do, man, I just do the best I can.

[Juvenilia]

## THE COMMUNIST EVOLUTION

*From a letter to President Roosevelt written by Fidel Castro in 1940. It is among a collection of letters to U.S. presidents that will be displayed in November at the National Archives in Washington, D.C.*

My good friend Roosvelt.

I don't know very English, but I know as much as write to you.

I like to hear the radio, and I am very happy, because I heard in it, that you will be President for a new (período).

I am twelve years old.

I am a boy but I think very much but I do not think that I am writing to the President of the United States.

If you like, give me a ten dollars bill green American, in the letter, because never, I have not seen a ten dollars bill green American and I would like to have one of them.

I don't know very English but I know very much Spanish and I suppose you don't know very Spanish but you know very English because you are American but I am not American.

Thank you very much. Good by.

Your friend,
Fidel Castro

If you want iron to make your ships I will show to you the bigest (minas) of iron of the land. They are in Mayari, Oriente, Cuba.

PERSON 1: Um, this guy from the *Wall Street* [illegible] a little bit ago. [illegible] "We [illegible] to some people and we want to [illegible] a power trader in the West."

[Petition]

## BLESS THIS MESS

*From a letter to God written in December 2000 by Joyti De-Laurey, then a secretary at the investment firm Goldman Sachs. In April of this year she was found guilty of stealing $8 million from her bosses Edward Scott Mead, Ron Beller, and Jennifer Moses, who had taken fourteen months to realize that the money was missing. De-Laurey had used some of the money to buy a villa in Cyprus, and was making preparations to move there when she was arrested.*

Dear God,

I write to you worried and fearful that once again I could find myself in serious trouble. I want to go back home knowing all is well with the house purchase and that I go back to work and do not find myself in lots of trouble regarding anything, especially not Amex of any of my bankers and Jennifer and Ron's bank account or any of their affairs. Please protect me. I need one more helping of what's mine upon my return, and then I must cut down and cease in time all the philandering. Please ensure my job is safe and my integrity unquestioned upon my return and that these remain secure throughout. I don't know what shall be happening with Ron and Jen, I only hope that they still think enough of me to continue to want me as their anchorperson. Please look after me as you always have. I promise to get my act together soon. With your protection and guidance I feel stronger and more able to survive.

God, I needed to write to you to ask and pray for your support over the foreseeable future, which remains uncertain but opportunistic for me. Please look after me, protect me, and stay with me and continue to love me.

[illegible]

[illegible] Oh my God.

[illegible] "A power trader. We've been told [illegible] you'd be a good candidate. Would you be interested in doing it?" What do you think? No way, huh?

[illegible] I mean, go ahead, but everyone's gonna mock you out. It's gonna be hilarious. It'll be plastered all over the place.

[illegible] Aw, I'm not gonna do it.

[illegible] Do it! Do it.

[illegible] Why?

PERSON 2: I think you should do it. It's kinda an honor to be in the *Wall Street Journal*.

PERSON 1: Yeah, you know why? They're just gonna use [illegible] I'm gonna get people to use shit against me. Oh, well this is what we do—see this Enron online, see?

PERSON 2: Exactly.

PERSON 1: Oh, let's just fuck with this guy just for fun because I'm bored. Okay, hey, I'll buy your 1 at 5.

[illegible] The thing is, anything they'd ask you, you'd have to lie because you wouldn't want to tell them the truth. Don't do it. Then your life would be over.

PERSON 1: Are you gonna do it?

[illegible] Naw, I doubt it. It's kind of like an honor, but I wouldn't do it.

PERSON 1: I wouldn't do it. 'Cause first of all, you'd have to tell 'em a lot of lies, 'cause if you told the truth—

[illegible] I'd get in trouble.

[illegible] You'd get in trouble.

[Instructions]

## AVOID THE WEASEL

*From a collection of Pythagorean* acusmata, *or "things heard," compiled by Brian Blanchfield and published in the eighth issue of* Jubilat. *In the fifth century B.C. the Pythagorean school split into two sects, the mathematics, who were dedicated to the study of the scientific branch of Pythagoreanism, and the acusmatics, who devoted themselves principally to the memorization and observance of precepts such as those below, which they were required to learn "without demonstrations or conferences or arguments."*

On starting a journey, do not turn back.

Rising from the bed, roll up the bedclothes and smooth out the imprint of the body.

Do not sleep at noon.

Do not pick up what has fallen from the table.

Do not step over a yoke.

# They're among the greatest minds the modern world has ver known—now *you* can study them with a great teacher...

If you believe that life should be a quest for values, reasons, and purpose—
filled with passion and governed by individual responsibility—
then *yours is the sort of mind to which the existentialist philosophers were speaking*

More than a half-century after it burst upon the intellectual scene—coming in the wake of bulent decades marked by global war, assive ideological violence, and the birth nuclear weapons—Existentialism has ntinued to exert a profound attraction individuals driven to reexamine life's ost fundamental questions of individual ponsibility, morality, and personal free- m.

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Robert Solomon is the Quincy Lee Centennial Professor of Philosophy at The University of Texas. A recipient of both the Standard Oil Outstanding Teaching Award and the President's Associates Teaching Award, he is the author of more than a dozen books in philosophy and psychology.

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6. Camus—*The Fall,* Part II
7. Søren Kierkegaard—"On Becoming a Christian"
8. Kierkegaard on Subjective Truth
9. Kierkegaard's Existential Dialectic
10. Friedrich Nietzsche on Nihilism and the Death of God
11. Nietzsche, the "Immoralist"
12. Nietzsche on Freedom, Fate, and Responsibility
13. Nietzsche—The *Übermensch* and the Will to Power
14. Three Grand Inquisitors—Dostoevsky, Kafka, Hesse
15. Husserl, Heidegger, and Phenomenology
16. Heidegger on the World and the Self
17. Heidegger on "Authenticity"
18. Jean-Paul Sartre at War
19. Sartre on Emotions and Responsibility
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Declining from the people's major highways,

be not held by uncontrollable laughter.

Do not look at yourself in a mirror by candlelight.

Fail not to believe any amazing things about deities.

One, two.

Be not held by uncontrollable laughter.

It is best to sustain, and show, wounds if they are in the breast.

Do not hold out your right hand to every person readily.

Never sing without harp accompaniment.

Do not draw near to a woman for the sake of begetting children, if she has gold.

Abstain from beans.

Give way to a flock that goes by.

Kill not the serpent that chances to fall within your walls.

Avoid the weasel.

Nourish a white cock, but sacrifice it not, for it is sacred to the sun and the moon and also announces hours.

Refuse the weapons a woman offers you.

Leap not from the chariot with your feet close together.

Speak not in the face of the sun.

Threaten not the stars.

Write not in the snow.

Do not cherish birds with crooked talons.

Do not wipe your bottom with a stick.

Do not urinate toward the sun.

Do not urinate or stand upon the parings of your nails or the cuttings of your hair.

Avoid a sharp sword.

Wear not a narrow ring.

Suffer no swallows around your house.

When the winds blow, kneel down to Echo.

[illegible] the chariot.

[illegible] the bread.

Always turn a vinegar cruet away from yourself.

Roast not what is boiled.

[illegible] Gods sacrifice not [illegible] number, but to the internal, an even.

[illegible] in worship.

Sleep [illegible].

Touch [illegible] thunder.

[Testimonials]

# MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN

*The following accounts are included in* When the Sun Sets, We Start to Worry . . . , *published last November by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Since Yoweri Museveni became president in 1986, more than 1.2 million Ugandans have been displaced, and tens of thousands killed, in fighting between the official Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) and rebel factions, including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The use of abducted children as soldiers and slaves has been a major feature of the conflict. since 2002, the LRA has kidnapped more than 20,000 children, usually at night. To avoid abduction, thousands of children leave their villages every night to hide in forests, hospitals, and churches.*

*Michael, twenty-five, a former abductee*

We had been walking in the bush for weeks, carrying heavy loads, with hardly any food or water. I couldn't carry their things anymore because I was too exhausted, so they beat me on the back of my head with gun butts. They said they didn't want to waste any bullets on me. Then they left me. They thought I was dead. UPDF soldiers found me a week later. Termites had started eating me alive. They had begun building an anthill on my body.

*Lillian, twelve*

The rebels abducted my brother first, in 1997. He never came back. We don't know where he is. This year, one of my elder brothers and two younger sisters were also abducted, on the same night. None of them has returned.

Both my parents have died. I don't remember when they died—I was still very small. I was told rebels came to our home and murdered them. I was left with only two brothers. We all come to this center every evening. In the morning we leave for school. There is no feeding program in our school.

I don't think of the future. I don't think I'll go to secondary school. There is no one to help.

*Albert, who takes care of eighteen children, seven of them his own*

My family used to have 1,500 head of cattle. We had tractors and other farm machines. All this was spoiled by the war. Three of my brothers have been killed by rebels. I have been left with their widows and children to look after. We manage only through very hard labor. We have been displaced from our village since 1990, and even here we are not safe.



*itchen of the Belloni Family," "Bedroom of Signora Invernizzi," and "Living Room of Signora Clara," by Paolo Ventura. Ventura constructed rooms using dollhouse furniture and then distressed them to replicate the effects of the World War II bombing of his father's home in Milan. His rk can be seen at the Ricco Maresca Gallery, in New York City.*

The LRA abducted one of my brother's children from this compound. I am always worrying about the children. They are too young to be on their own. There are a lot of dangers at night. This problem is big, and we don't have any hope for the future. We have appealed to the international community to come and help, but we have not seen anything.

We see the children in the morning. They don't get breakfast. The women don't rest. They do all the work, because I am disabled. I cannot walk, and my hearing was damaged when rebels beat me in 1989. They have caused a lot of disability in our area. But there are no programs for people with disabilities, so we depend only on the power of God.

*O.R., fourteen, abducted in February 2003:*

On the way to Sudan, they forced us to kill many people. One morning a young boy was brought to us. We were told he had tried to escape. They had killed him. His body was swollen and cut from many beatings. We were told to chop the body into smaller pieces. Boys were given the heart and liver to eat. Girls were told to cook and eat the rest of the body parts. We did as we were told.

A few days later a commander called me and said he had a special task for me. He was carrying a newborn baby. He placed the baby in a large wooden mortar, the one we used for pounding grain. He gave me a heavy wooden pestle and ordered me to start pounding. I was afraid, but I did as I was told. All the boys in the group had been forced to do something similar. I knew the baby's mother. She was one of the captives. She screamed when she saw what I was doing. The commanders beat her and told her to shut up, but they did not kill her. They told me to continue pounding until they were satisfied the baby was dead.

I am constantly disturbed by what I did in the bush. I dream about it all the time. Sometimes I hear voices saying things to me. The voices keep telling me, "Pound faster . . . faster . . . harder." I fear sleep because of the nightmares. I want these dreams to stop tormenting me.

*Elijah, seventy, resident of an internally displaced persons camp:*

I had fourteen children. Some are dead. Most of them died in camps. They were killed by rebels. We didn't even bury them; we left them where they had been killed.

At night my eight grandchildren sleep in the bush with no blankets. I don't know where they sleep, and they always choose a different spot. Not even your mother is supposed to know your hiding place. Rebels always force parents to show them where the children are hiding.

Life in the camp is very bad. I am seeing a lot of things that I never saw before. I would prefer to die than to see any more of this life. These children live like wild animals. They have to be alert all the time. Their morals are changing. During the day we are relaxed, but when the sun sets, we start to worry. We don't know what can happen.

[Poem]

# STICKS AND STONES

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

"What's your name?"
"My name is my name,
And none of your business, under the pain of!"

[illegible]

Every 1st May, first of May,
A lame hen
[illegible]

[illegible]

"Someone's got me."
What's with him?
He's pressed the panic
He's ashamed.

[illegible]

A fat Pickled-Lemon Chandler
Who has farted?
You!"

[illegible]

It's Martine
Who's next door
Who peed in her bucket
On [illegible] Catherine Street
And her motorcycle.

[illegible]

[illegible]
With milk-cream-bleeding-cocktail
What the child's come
[illegible]

[illegible]

Jingle bells, jingle bells,
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
Jingle bells, jingle bells

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

What you say applies to yourself,
"Well, you head in fault
Well, you head the mold the well
Until I marry, marry tomorrow."

[illegible]

If we it last my butt's my pantry
And filled with lemonade,
Then you my friendly could lick it
Until my buttocks were flat.

[illegible]

The Fuck Fire Exploded testicles,
Despite there being no wind Blowing,
Are swaying, swaying, swaying.

[Memoir]

# THE GIRL IN THE SHINY BOOTS

*From Richard Wollheim's* Germs: A Memoir of Childhood, *to be published in September by* Waywiser Press. *Wollheim, the author of* Art and Its Objects, *among many other books, died last November. A longer version of this extract appeared in the* May 21 London Review of Books.

For as long as my parents still went on holiday together, which ended around my sixth or seventh year, there was nothing unusual in the fact that I should have been sent off with my nanny to stay in what was called a Board Residence in a seaside town on the South Coast. The first two or three weeks of the holiday were divided between long periods of routine and brief moments of terror, with, I am sure, some pleasure in the middle. I call the parts "pleasure," "terror," and "routine" to mark the fact that for me in those years routine too was a kind of emotion. Pleasure erupted into my life when the weather permitted a trip to the pier, and I was allowed to walk up and down the row of black and silver boxes, which were arranged along the broadwalk, until I chose the peep-show I wanted to see, and for this I could divert a penny from the buying of a comic. There were, I believe, peep-shows for all tastes, and there might have been some that were unsuitable for children, but I did not spare a thought for them because I was interested solely in the historical dramas, and supreme among them was the trial and execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, in the great hall of Fotheringay Castle.

The momentous event, the inevitability of which was conveyed in a way that no history book could rival, unfolded in distinct tableaux, in the third and last of which Mary, who had already faced her accusers and said farewell to her ladies-in-waiting, was found kneeling with her neck on the block. At a signal from the man with the long auburn beard, who was the sovereign's emissary, the masked executioner stepped forward, the axe rose and fell, and the head rolled. The great portcullis descended, and then there was a click, and the scene went dark. By the time the next person stepped up to the box, and another penny dropped, and the portcullis rose on the first tableau, the head was back on the young queen's shoulders, and she was ready to meet her stern tormentors once again, to pit in vain her beauty and her freshness against their heavy, grown-up authority. Sometimes, amid the protests of my nanny ("Isn't there something you'd rather spend your money on? You won't be able to sleep tonight"), I would insist on watching the drama a second time through, for I needed to know that Mary could have life restored to her, even if only to lose it again, and as pathetically. I deeply resented the presence of the holidaymakers standing behind me, looking over my shoulder, waiting for their turn, but I told myself that they could not take anything from me, because, while they were condemned to stay put among the crowd on the pier, eating ice cream or candy floss, breathing in the salt air, listening to the waves lapping at the metal struts below, wrapped in noisy laughter, I could, through the power of concentration, slip out of the present and escape back down the centuries to the scene of death and a woman's courage. Such experiences were what I meant by a holiday.

I try now, through the mists of time, to make out the precise tugs of sympathy that the death scene of Mary, Queen of Scots, animated within me. As far as the central drama was concerned, I was wholly on the side of Mary, and wholly against Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a recurrent figure of loathing, occupying a place in my historical animosities on a par with that later to be filled by Churchill. I had my reasons. First, she was a patriot. Second, as I was to learn from various novels, she was an enemy of love, and she oppressed it and its faithful devotees whenever she could: one victim of her destructive rage was the impetuous Essex, another Amy Robsart, who was later to become a favorite of mine. But, worst of all, there was the permanent imputation, never properly laid to rest, that the Virgin Queen was a man. But, if between Mary and Elizabeth my loyalties were clear enough, and if, as far as Mary herself was concerned, it was my deepest loyalties that were engaged, what to think about the executioner caused me great turmoil. It was easy to think of him as the agent of badness, and there was some strand in my religious thinking that led me to entertain such thoughts only too readily. But I did not like this harsh way of thinking, and, in this particular case, I saw the man who wielded the axe as himself a victim, a victim indeed of that fate

[Poem]

## AGAINST THE AMERICAN GRAIN

*By Charles Wright, from the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of* Irish Pages.

Stronger and stronger, the sunlight glues
The afternoon to its objects,
the baby pine tree,
The scapular shadow thrown over the pond and meadow grass,
The absence the two
horses have left on the bare slope,
The silence that grazes like two shapes where they have been.

The slow vocabulary of sleep
spits out its consonants
And drifts in its vowely weather,
Sun-pocked, the afternoon dying among its odors,
The cocaine smell of the wind,
The too-sweet and soft-armed
fragrance around the reluctant lilac bush.

Flecked in the underlap, however,
half-glimpsed, half-recognized,
Something unordinary persists,
Something unstill, never-sleeping, just possible past reason.
Then unflecked by evening's outflow
and its counter current.
What mystery can match its maliciousness, what moan?

[Template]
LIKE [illegible] ONE

[illegible] program
[illegible] sex." The pro-
[illegible]gram, will be released
[illegible] in the fall

[illegible] GOOD IDEAS FOR STORIES?
[illegible] with interesting stories on the spot
[illegible]lly tough. But if you follow one simple
[illegible]u'll easily get the hang of things. Just take
[illegible] thing in your everyday life and pervert it.
[illegible] example, if you got your car washed today,
[illegible] can say that you took this hot guy that worked
at the car wash into the car with you and blew him
while the car was getting washed.

ONE TYPICAL THING/PLACE + ONE SEXUAL ACT + ONE SEXY CHARACTER = SEXY STORY

CAR WASH + HOT BLOW JOB + MUSCLE-BOUND HUNK = HOT CAR WASH/BLOW JOB STORY

Just add one word in each category together, and you'll have a story idea!

TYPICAL THINGS
going to the bank
grocery shopping
on an airplane
in the bookstore
on top of a roof
in your parents' basement
riding on a train
visiting the doctor/dentist/therapist

SEXUAL ACTS
gave a hand job/fingered
fucked
had people watch
had anal sex
had an orgy
was in a gang bang

TYPICAL CHARACTERS
landlord
relative
boyfriend's dad
delivery guy/mailman
total stranger from bus, train, gym, coffee shop
cop that pulled you over
[illegible]log or animal of choice (because you were curi-
[illegible]ous/bec[illegible]use boyfriend thought it would be hot)
cabdrive[illegible] in cab while driving on a side street)
little [illegible]r's nerdy friend
doc[illegible] salesman



which claimed the young queen as another victim. And that he should live to see another day, whereas she could not, was not so obvious an advantage, since, as every new penny proved, the day that he lived to see was only another day on which he was obliged to take a life; and whether it was another life, or the same life another time, was immaterial.

In 1943, when I was in the army, at an officer cadet training unit at Heysham, every Wednesday or Thursday night we would walk the two or three miles into Morecambe, and go to the dance in the Floral Hall. From about eight to midnight, several hundred men and women, nearly all in uniform, were packed in under a pink-and-gold dome, and wandered round in a haze, searching for a partner. I danced badly, and I was convinced that I alone of everyone under the great dome could think of nothing to say when the music stopped. I did not really like the routine of the dance floor. I was apprehensive of the greedy looks, given and taken, which served as introductions. It, the whole thing, was something for which I was too little prepared, and the trains of thought that ran through my mind in rapid succession amazed me with their absurdity. I never believed that any girl wanted me, but I was terrified of being entrapped. Desperate for the mere recognition of my existence, I felt that anyone I danced with completely owned me, both in her eyes and, for the duration of the dance, in my eyes too. My feet were not free to dance as I would have liked them to, my mouth was not free to form the words I wanted to utter, my eyes were not my own to turn in whatever direction they were drawn. My only desire was to please the girl I was with, but, inside the body that my arm lightly, gently encircled, I could feel waves of scorn rising and crashing against the ribcage. And all the while I lived with this terrible premonition: that, were a girl in uniform, through what I recognized would have been an act of random kindness on her part, actually to have taken it on herself to initiate me into the pleasures of upright sexuality, fully dressed, one eye kept open for the military police, the cries of soldiers reveling in the distance, the rough salt air blowing off the Irish Sea, I would have responded by falling so desperately in love with her that, as likely as not, my feeble sense of what being a soldier required of me would have crumbled, and the next night, and the next night, and the night after that, would have seen me standing under her window, a common deserter, shouting out her name through my tears.

Despite the secrecy that surrounded their [illegible]re, I knew three things of women, and all [illegible]ted to their superiority. The first was that

women were beautiful. Women were beautiful in paintings and in photographs, and so, with only two horrific exceptions, were the women I encountered in life. It is true that, if I stood back far enough from them, my nanny and my governess were not beautiful, but then I loved their faces with such passion that for them to be judged from any distance greater than that at which I could trace with my finger or with the tip of my nose the nooks and crannies of their features would have seemed irrelevant.

The second way in which women showed their superiority was in the more interesting and enjoyable lives that they lived. Men had to make money, which women, on the whole, did not, and this had the striking consequence that, whereas men were never permitted to talk about how they passed their days, it was something that women discussed continuously. Women could, I knew, be painters, sculptors, poets, dancers, actresses. There was no limit to the paradise that opened up at their feet and stretched forward indefinitely, whereas for men such possibilities existed only rarely, and then mostly in the past, in history.

Third, women could love, they could fall in love, they could be in love, they could be lovesick. They could *feel*. Sometimes, after a man and a woman who had come down to the house for lunch had driven off, one of my parents would say, not exactly to the other, for that was not how they talked, but more into the surrounding air: "Why does she go on doing it? What does she get out of it? When will she settle down? Why is she throwing away the best years of her life?" If only, I would feel, these questions had been asked of me, I, though not able to put it into words, would have had much to say. I would have begun by saying that these were women, something that my father had never been, and perhaps something that my mother had forgotten how to be, and I would then have gone on to say that, for women, for some women at least, love, love in itself, love unrequited, love that did not even seek for anything in return, in other words the pure culture of love, could be a way of life.

In thinking of women as the natural habitat of love, I did not envisage this condition as one of pain. Rather I conceived of the pangs of love as an internal flame, which warmed the soul rather than burned or singed it, and it gave a sumptuousness to women in glorious contrast to the partially frozen condition in which men, grown-up men, passed their lives. What made their condition fortunate, if not exactly happy, was that it transported them to a land, not otherwise visited by adults, where passion and excitement, the raw stuff of poetry, flourished, and where languor and even boredom, though not of the cruel kind visited on idle boys, sometimes took over.

This state of love, which was open only to women, though not all women availed themselves of it, was, I concluded, an internal state, but what made it tolerable was that it was not innermost, as was the life of children. A gulf separated it from the shrill, high-pitched despair, from the never distant scalding tears, which I saw as belonging exclusively to a child's existence, and which I believed were comprehensible to God alone. Grown-up love did not result in that constant need to talk to oneself, which in my experience led so readily to prayer. When women fell in love, every step in their condition was carefully tied to some outward action, which expressed and relieved it. They picked up the telephone, they lit a cigarette, they bought more than ordinarily expensive shoes, they got someone to draw their portrait. The rearrangements that all this might, or might not, necessitate were more like changes of train or destination, caused by the need for a foreign holiday, or by the sight of a young face, or made in response to a sudden judicious absence abroad. Even when women cried, they cried to an end: they did not cry the futile, solitary, acid tears of children, nor, as their crying stopped, did they finish on a snivel. There was a word, a very special word for women in love, a word which I spent years brooding over, and which I did not fully understand, but which had the effect of diminishing somewhat their ultimate vulnerability, and of returning them, by however roundabout a route, to somewhere not so far outside the ranks of ordinary grown-ups, who, on Sunday mornings, walked to church, and dropped to their knees, and had nothing to say to a God who failed to understand them: they were—this was the word—"sophisticated."

In my view of the lovesick condition as something peculiarly within reach of women, there was a lacuna, a hole, which, until it was filled in, deprived the picture of all sense. When women are in love, who are they in love with? I knew deep down one thing for certain, and that was that the right answer was not men. There was nothing about men, not their manner, not their faces, not their bodies, not the way they talked, not their minds, not their feelings, if they had them, not even their elegant shirts and ties, that could make it plausible that they were the real objects of women's love: it was a thought that could not ultimately be taken seriously. And, if this was so clear to me, after all a boy myself, was it conceivable that women, the monopolists of beauty, who knew what beauty was from the inside, would betray their inheritance, their birthright, so lightly? I understood that women had to behave as though they loved men, otherwise they would starve, and such behavior on their part was totally honor-



"Kids, Omaha Beach," by Nathalie Grenzhaeuser, was on display this spring at the James Nicholson Gallery, in San Francisco.

able, just as it could be totally honorable for men to die in battle for their country. Love of money, love of country, were not, in my eyes, good things in themselves, but it might be inevitable that, in certain circumstances, one should sacrifice oneself for them. There was, I knew from books and from my father's conversation, another mysterious word for women, which was really supreme praise, though stupid people could not see this. Some women were "adventuresses," tawny-haired women who hacked their way through the jungle of men with a deep inner pride.

I had come to the conclusion that the only way, though not an easy way, in a world in which women love women, a man might come to win a woman's love was to try, in thought, in speech, in gesture, to become as like women as nature would permit, in much the same way as, within religion, which was only just beginning to lose its command over me, or perhaps to exchange one form of command for another, the believer tries to come closer to Christ through the imitation of Christ. The way to a woman's heart, I had come to believe, was along the hard, stony, arduous track of effeminacy.

It was September 1939, and war had just been declared, and my father had decided that we must evacuate ourselves immediately, even though there was no sign of war nearer than the Polish frontier, which the German army, under the leadership of the mythical Guderian, had just crossed in force. We packed our bags, closed up the house, and drove down to Devonshire, where my father installed us in a large early nineteenth-century hotel on the seafront at Teignmouth.

After breakfast I dressed, and came downstairs, and made a careful decision about where to sit for the morning and read the English poets, or the harsh denunciations of war and capitalism that I had brought with me. On the second or third day, I noticed a girl of my age leap up from her chair, cross the road in front of the hotel, and walk rapidly toward the sea. She moved with great speed, her fair hair was cut in a bell, she wore a tartan skirt and very shiny black rubber boots, and she always carried a book. Sometimes she read walking, but it did not slow her down. She was staying in the hotel with her mother, to whom she seemed to have a great deal to say. Would I ever talk to her, this creature from Mars, this character from an Aldous Huxley novel? I assumed not, but to my amazement I found a way of doing so, I do not know how, and straightaway we were walking together, slightly faster than I would have chosen, round and round the municipal gardens that stretched from the hotel to the sea, pausing to watch the old men playing

bowls, or, standing on the front, looking at the upended fishing boats with their fresh coats of tar. We barely had to remind each other that these were the sights on which the young Keats had fed. She told me that she lived in the Lake District with her mother, who ran a hotel, but she boarded at a convent school in Berkshire. She knew a boy I knew at school who, by this time, had graduated from being my worst persecutor to being my accomplice in all kinds of literary and political subversion. She had read Marx, and Auden, and French poetry, though surreptitiously, because the nuns didn't like it. What brought us together, however, was Russia, which was for me so much the past, and the present and the future. Our conversation suddenly lit up, like a great firework display, when we started to talk about Dostoevsky, and our versions of the Russian soul and the Russian Revolution.

As to the war, neither of us cared a great deal about the future of Poland, or, at any rate, about the future of Colonel Beck's Poland, and we were in agreement that it was the worst issue over which to have started a war. Did I really think, Jill asked me, stopping abruptly, and staring at the splash of color in the flowerbed, that intervention in the Spanish War would have made all that difference? Did I admire Orwell, did I read Lorca, was I sympathetic to Kropotkin? Did I think this, did I think that? I was amazed at these questions, since it was I who wanted to know everything that she thought. She was serious and intense, something that boys could be only under the lash of being bullied or in the throes of adolescent desire. It was only when I saw her coming from a distance that I dared look at her, and then I scrutinized her body from the top of her head and her straight pale hair to the toe of her boot. As she came closer to me, I took my eyes off her and stared straight ahead, so that, by the time she reached my side, I professed to be taken by surprise. It has been pointed out to me that this is something that to this day I do with certain people, with people I love, and I do it, I suppose, to avoid some unfathomable disappointment.

Term started soon afterward, despite the war. Jill and I separated, though I do not recall the details of the parting, and my school was evacuated to the Sussex coast. I was anxious to see my schoolfriend, my onetime persecutor, now unique to me as the friend of Jill, and to tell him about the conversations on the seafront, and I believe that he encouraged me to write to Jill. I did, more than once: long, flowery, scented, perhaps even literally scented, letters, with quotations, I am sure, from the French and Latin poets, but I never had a reply. I believe that I was upset, but I was inclined to think of the whole incident, and the fast walks, and the conversations, and the questions, as a dream. I was certain that none of it could have left a residue in Jill's clear, forceful mind, which strove so hard, as I saw it, to be unencumbered, and ready for ever new truths about ever new things.

That was how things were, more than sixty years ago, and that was how they remained for fifty years or so, until, that is, about ten years ago, when the philosopher who gave me my first job died, and the event achieved wide recognition, and I came to write an obituary in a leading newspaper in which I tried to defend him against the petty moralism that I foresaw. Some weeks later, a letter arrived for me in California. I could not tell from the envelope who had written it, and I opened it with eagerness: it was from Jill. She had read the obituary, and explained to me, as though it were something I knew already, that my letters to her had been stopped by the nuns, and so, she eventually discovered, had her letter to me. When she did find out what had happened, she had told our common friend, and had asked him to tell me.

Whether I already knew all this or not was hard for me to tell: it was Jill's continuing awareness of me that took me by surprise. Her letter evoked with great force the memory of those walks against the background of distant battles. She wrote with great charm and with great precision of phrase, and said that the first awakening of intellectual curiosity, or excitement, I cannot remember the word she used, could, though often unattended to, be as important an experience as the first awakening of physical love. She had read some philosophy, she told me, but nowadays she mostly tended her garden. From the postmark I gathered that she lived in a large Midlands city, but she omitted her address, and gave only her maiden name, a double-barreled name that I have now forgotten. I say her maiden name, though she did not indicate whether she had married. She asked me to think of her as she then was. I did not need the injunction. The image of the girl with the fair hair, and the tartan skirt, and the shiny boots, cutting through the damp, balmy air of the Devon coast, was impervious to decay, and I hope that it has escaped any clumsy retouching. I found a safe place in which to keep her letter close to my bedside, but it was so safe, so unlikely, a place, that now I cannot find it, which saddens me. The letter made me think, among other things, this: that if my letters had got through to Jill, if I had heard back from her, if somehow what I call my life had started from such an early point, when I was under the same roof as my parents, and still found it conceivable that I should talk to my mother, and lived on pocket money kept in a leather purse with a flap, then not only would my life have been different, it would have been the life of a very different me. It would have been the life of someone who remained the permanent spoiled convalescent that I wanted to be forever.









*"Canto XVIII, 111–113: At the Edge of Malebolge," "Canto XXVI, 31–33: Above the Eighth Circle," "Canto XXXII, 23–24: The Lake of Ice," and "Canto XXXIV, 28–30: Lucifer," four lithographs by Sandow Birk for a modern version of Dante's* Inferno, *published in April by Chronicle Books.*

# LIBERALISM REGAINED

## Building the next progressive majority

America's progressives—those who believe, as did Abraham Lincoln, that "government should do for the people what they cannot do for themselves"—no longer enjoy much of a presence in the national political debate. Their program of social reform was once thought to define enlightened government, but in the years since the election of Ronald Reagan the idea that the public good is superior to the private interest has been run out of Washington by the Republicans and denied asylum even by the formerly hospitable Democrats. Although sometimes propped up for photo ops with Bill Clinton, the progressive agenda never regained the force imparted to it by FDR's New Deal and sustained by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

The Democratic Party at the moment presents no message that can be heard as even a mild objection to the Republican program of privatization, extravagant military spending, tax cuts for the rich, welfare cuts for the poor. Yet the increasingly negative response to the Bush Administration's disastrous war in Iraq, to its shortsighted economic policy and its curtailment of civil liberties, is evidence that much of the citizenry is still firmly progressive. In the hope of discovering if and how their collective voice might return to the nation's political arena, *Harper's Magazine* invited five notable progressive thinkers to sit down together and consider the problem.

*The [illegible] is professor of law at the New School University, in New York City.*

*[illegible] and was an independent candidate for [illegible] He is co-director of the Center for Constitutional Rights.*

*teaches at Columbia University and is the author of* Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War *and* Who Owns History? *among other books.*

*is an independent candidate for president in 2004 and was the Green Party candidate in 1996 and 2000.*

*is the author of* The Emerging Republican Majority *and, most recently,* American Dynasty; *in 1968 he was a political analyst for Richard Nixon's presidential campaign.*

FRANCES FOX PIVEN

*teaches at the City University of New York and is the author or coauthor of numerous books, including* Regulating the Poor *and* Why Americans Still Don't Vote.

*is editor of* Harper's Magazine.

## I. THE OPPORTUNITY

KEVIN PHILLIPS: I don't know if the Democrats fully understand what a defining moment in American political history a Bush presidency is. The job approval of the first President Bush climbed as high as 89 percent right after the Gulf War but fell to 29 percent in the summer of 1992; he wound up losing in 1992 with 37 percent of the vote, the worst showing for an incumbent president since William Howard Taft in 1912. Our current President is the second generation of this esteemed line. His own approval rating got up to 90 percent right after the September 11 attacks and is now, according to the most recent poll, at 46 percent. Like his father, he's proved that it's possible to drop more than 40 percentage points within one administration.

ERIC FONER: Support for the war in Iraq has unraveled incredibly fast. And that would not have happened if there hadn't been so much opposition to the war to begin with, no matter how much Bush thumbed his nose at it. Also, we've finally seen the media turn on him. The media march along in lockstep in whatever direction they think things are heading: when they had the idea that Bush was riding high, you couldn't find an anti-Bush view. But now you turn on the evening news and all you get is how everything is going wrong. This is not because the media are controlled by liberals, any more than they were controlled by conservatives a year ago when they were spouting the administration line over and over again.

RALPH NADER: It's because they were lied to, and they don't like that.

FONER: We're also starting to see a backlash against the religious right. On libertarian grounds, on privacy grounds. Americans don't want to see the government in league with religious people telling them how to conduct their lives.

PHILLIPS: You'll notice that the tendency of a lot of these religious-right leaders, when they come under fire, has been to retreat from the public arena. I'm convinced that the religious right will encounter major opposition as the decade unfolds.

RON D. DANIELS: More so than at any other point in my lifetime, I think, people seem to sense that the country is careening out of control. The abuses in the Iraqi prisons are just the most recent example. More and more people are expressing concerns about the Patriot Act, and about the conduct of the Justice Department under John Ashcroft. And there is widespread anxiety about basic issues like unemployment, job security, and access to health insurance.

FRANCES FOX PIVEN: We've also seen the universities come alive, and not just over Iraq. A few years ago it was the living-wage campaigns for university employees, and before that the anti-sweatshop campaigns. Fifteen years ago, as I went from one university to another, nobody was really interested in economic issues. Today they are definitely interested. They come out to support the graduate-student organizing campaigns. Someone will get up in the audience at public gatherings and say, "Do you know how much janitors are getting paid on this campus?" It's quite a change.

FONER: On many of the most important issues, there is in fact a progressive majority in the polls. More than half of Americans believe that the federal government is doing too little to safeguard the environment. More than half oppose waging preemptive wars. Almost four fifths believe that it would be worth raising taxes to provide universal health care.

LEWIS H. LAPHAM: Why, then, does the Democratic Party continue to flop around like a dead fish?

NADER: Robert Frost once defined a liberal as someone who has trouble arguing his own case. If you look at the history of our country, the major justice movements have been colored liberal, and their opponents have been colored conservative: Social Security, trade unions, slavery, and so on. But the Democrats never talk about their victories. When was the last time you saw a major Democratic candidate brag about how many lives the Democrats saved by pushing through air- and water-pollution laws, auto-safety laws, the Consumer Product Safety Commission Bill? They don't ever say that.

PIVEN: They should. The public has never had animosity toward government programs, certainly not nearly as much as has been whipped up by politicians of both parties. Most government interventions have broad support. Environmental regulation, Social Security, Medicare—these are all very popular.

DANIELS: Instead, the word "liberal" is a word that the Democrats distance themselves from. They avoid it as if it were the plague.

NADER: And if you get on the defensive in politics, you remain on the defensive for a long time.

PHILLIPS: The reason, of course, is that Democrats have been anesthetized by campaign contributions. And I should add that they have been anesthetized cheaply. During the last twenty or twenty-five years, the Republicans have been able to take money for granted, but the Democrats know they need to get it, and so they've become willing to soften their language and back away from their convictions. Their neediness cripples them.

NADER: The Democrats could be hammering on the money that Bush raises at these $3 million dinners. They could say, "This dinner is for pharmaceutical money, this one's for oil." They could make an issue about it every time. But the Democrats are caught in the same net.

PHILLIPS: It would be devastating if they could attack the conservatives for having used public money to bail out Wall Street and the corporations. But they can't. The Republicans have so many weaknesses that the Democrats can't exploit, because they have taken a second, smaller helping from the same trough. What hands you a political opportunity in the United States is when something goes very wrong for the people who have power. Today the Republicans are in trouble, and the main thing they have to keep them from imploding is that the Democrats are not much better.

LAPHAM: How, then, can the Democrats better themselves? What would a truly progressive message sound like?

PIVEN: Our rhetorical task is far easier than that of the Republicans. It's actually hard to put over a set of ideas so grossly distorted as those emanating from the reactionary right. We should talk about reclaiming democracy by reducing corporate power and reducing inequality, especially the inequalities that affect working people and poor people. Reclaiming democracy also by reforming the institutions of electoral politics, which have been so subverted. It's not a hard argument.

DANIELS: We need a transformative vision, one advancing the notion that America can be more than it is today for average, ordinary people. The Democratic Party should advocate a program of basic rights, like the one enjoyed by many social democratic countries in Europe. Americans really feel that they have the best standard of living in the world. They don't, but they don't know they don't. Virtually every nation in Western Europe has universal health care. In Sweden, Norway, and Holland, the social benefits are so generous that poverty has been practically eliminated. Wages in most European countries now outpace wages in the United States.



NADER: The impassioned political argument in American society today should be the one over the sovereignty of corporations and their entrenchment into every institutional system. The giant multinational corporations set the parameters and the paradigms. They get into kids' minds at age two, or three, or four. Every day another frontier falls to commercial intrusion. And when that happens, we begin to lose our sovereignty. We slowly lose the structure

Illustrations by Edward del Rosario

ever. There are certain things that shouldn't be for sale.

imply that the other issues are peripheral. I don't [illegible] the only real issues were economic ones, while other issues—racial, gender, cultural, environmental—were secondary. If there's going to be a new progressive movement, all of those issues are going to have to become part of a coherent outlook.

NADER: But progressive movements require clarity of purpose. The populist progressive movement, which started in the 1880s, had clarity; it went after the railroads and the banks: the high price of loans, the high prices of freight.



LAPHAM: In our postmodern circumstance, Ralph, what issue might provide that sort of clarity?

NADER: The living wage. Today we have 47 million full-time workers making less than $10 an hour. Twenty-five percent of all workers make $8.70 an hour or less. And this affects their whole lives. Without a living wage, Americans are forced into frantic, desperate attempts to find additional part-time work, to find day care and all the rest. Wages are the issue that can connect politics to the personal daily experience. It's not a difficult issue; it's not a derivative issue. It's a direct issue.

PHILLIPS: But are people who don't make a living wage registered to vote in this country? What's the percentage? Frances, you would know this.

PIVEN: I would guess that it's probably less than half.

PHILLIPS: Probably well under half, right?

[illegible] If you compare Americans above the median wage to those below the median wage, the turnout difference is two to one.

PHILLIPS: So I don't think that advocating the living wage is a plan to reach an electoral majority. It's a prescription for some form of minority. I don't know how big it is or how small it is, but it's nothing that will win an election in the United States. In moderate, independent-leaning districts—Nassau County on Long Island, say, or the San Fernando Valley in California—nobody's going to listen. Now, we are using the word "progressive," and it's an interesting word. There were Progressive parties that ran candidates for elections in the 1910s and 1920s. But Teddy Roosevelt, who ran as a Progressive in 1912, and Robert LaFollette, who ran as one in 1924, both came from the Republican Party, as did many of the other Progressives. They managed to speak to the concerns of people in the middle, and therefore to majorities in some places. No matter how much you might want to do it, I don't think you can redefine national politics with issues that speak only to a 10 or 15 percent left periphery of the American political culture.

LAPHAM: Are there any issues that could speak to a larger part of the electorate? Or do most Americans now think of politics as something that only happens in the Balkans?

PHILLIPS: The obvious thing is the mess that the Bush Administration is making in Iraq. The imperial approach has lost us credibility all over the world. If this can't be used as an indictment against Bush, then I don't know what can. The man is the least competent military leader since James Madison let the British burn Washington. Other issues moderates are concerned about are deficit spending and campaign finance. You've got to assemble a new progressive movement with disaffected elements of the existing Republican coalition.

NADER: What we need, though, more than stands on specific issues, is a strong emotional message. There's a reason why the unions have the slogan "Which side are you on?" We should list the major goals for our country, and ask, Who is saying no? Health insurance for everyone:

who is saying no? A living wage: who is saying no? It's the corporations, and corporate interests. You can list one after another: tax reform, honest elections. If you want to find out what the problems are in this country—what keeps it from progressing—you should ask who's saying no. Until we get that kind of clarity, we're going to have cognitive dissonance in the progressive community.

## II. BEHIND ENEMY LINES

LAPHAM: The reactionary right isn't afflicted with the disease of cognitive dissonance. It enjoys the services of a propaganda ministry funded over the last thirty years by romantic billionaires who believe that they are rescuing the country from godless liberalism.

NADER: They're on a mission.

PIVEN: But what is this single conservative mission, exactly? Grover Norquist holds weekly meetings in Washington, and the groups that come together . . .

FONER: They don't agree on anything, really.

PIVEN: Right. They're the rifle people, the Christian right and the pro-life people, and the anti-tax people. They're funded by corporations like Pfizer and Philip Morris. But nothing seems to hold these groups together, other than that they all want to keep the Bushies in power.

LAPHAM: What holds the factions together—the Christian and neoconservative right, the racists and the homophobes—is their common tendency to believe in such a thing as absolute truth, the bright transcendent line between good and evil, right and wrong. The religious rather than the secular habit of mind.

NADER: Just an inside look here: I've been to one of Grover Norquist's meetings. These guys are so secure in their power that they called me up and said, "Come to our Wednesday meeting and speak."

FONER: How did you like it?

NADER: You walk in. The room is a little bigger than this, jammed. Okay? Everyone there has health insurance, I can guarantee you. Everyone has a good retirement plan. Everyone has career prospects. They're of all ages, but they're almost all white and well-to-do. Before I make my remarks, I sit there and watch the master sergeant. "Okay, here's S. 22; it's coming up. Who's called this person, who's called that person?" It made a Marine drill look modest by comparison. When anyone talked a half a minute over his time, he was cut off: "Come on, we don't have time. Who's getting ahold of Karl Rove on this? Has this PAC called so-and-so?"

PHILLIPS: And when they say they can do it, they can do it.

NADER: Grover Norquist has a thirty-five-year plan for America. In great detail.

PHILLIPS: I wonder how the thirty-five-year plan is doing at the moment?

LAPHAM: It's buried in Baghdad, I think. It's a missing weapon of mass destruction.

NADER: Now, what is it that binds the conservatives together? Why does Tom DeLay have six times the energy of Tom Daschle? Here's what it is.

PIVEN: What?

NADER: Liberals. The common enemy. Conservatives of all denominations want to crush, smash, and vaporize liberals and liberalism in America. They can't even say the words without a snarl.

PHILLIPS: But the joke, of course, is that the liberals haven't been in power for thirty years. It's as if conservatives are seeing a ghost from the sixties and seventies.

NADER: Yes, but they carry their grievances around with them. They're always meeting, having dinners in Washington parlors and clubs. With liberal groups, you may not see the guy across the street for six years.

FONER: Maybe we need to have more dinners.

DANIELS: We need to talk to one another and put together a methodical, relentless message. When we go on the various talk shows, the people from the right are always better prepared. We're there trying to improvise in the moment, because our think tanks haven't prepared us to put the right message on the table.

NADER: But our message is also missing something else: the emotional content, in the best sense of the phrase. One of the reasons is that liberals aren't good haters. Whereas the agents and apostles of the right, they really are haters.

DANIELS: Well, maybe I'm being naive. But there was an emotional content to the civil rights movement, and I don't think it was driven by hate. It was driven by the belief in a better world. And there was true passion in that belief. The progressive side has had difficulty translating the issues. We have to learn not just to say that we're for universal health care, for example, but to translate that in a way that doesn't get us killed by people who would call us tax-and-spend liberals. We've become so caught up in the mechanics and the methodology that we can't get the message straight. We don't have a sense of what the vision is.

LAPHAM: Possibly because both the Democratic vision and the Republican vision have been paid for by the same sponsors.

PHILLIPS: Among the Republicans from, say, 1966 through 1980, when Reagan was elected, there was very little self-confidence. They felt embattled, because for so many years they hadn't been in power. So it's ridiculous to portray

comes from having controlled the White House
The Democrats are at a very logical stage
lot of confidence, simply because they've seen the Republicans whip them for so long.

LAPHAM: During the 1960s the Republicans were
and like lost sheep, as lost as the Democrats of today. Both Lionel Trilling and John Kenneth Galbraith had pronounced America liberal to the bone. There was no argument.

FONER: But while the Republican Party itself was struggling, the movement conservatives were constructing an alternate universe of political theory and policy initiatives. You had many people working for many, many years outside of the political process to change public opinion.

HILLS: What the Republicans got handed to them on a plate in the late 1960s was the triple failure of liberalism in the United States: Vietnam, inflation, and the decay of the cities. Still, most Republicans didn't have a clue what they were going to do—aside from pandering to their constituencies. The liberal intellectuals and policymakers had become too sure of themselves, so lazy and complacent that they failed to pay attention to people who didn't share their opinions. The conservatives have the same problem today. They've taken all these exotic ideas dreamed up twenty years ago at the Heritage Foundation or the American Enterprise Institute—about how to turn everything into a free market or a cruise missile—and by trying to put them into practice, they've overreached themselves.

LAPHAM: How can progressives take advantage of that overreaching?

PHILLIPS: There are four or five progressive stands today that actually speak very well to a lot of dissident Republicans. Remember that since 1992 it has been the Republicans, as well as the Democrats, who have produced presidential candidates running on various progressive lines: Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan, and John McCain. You had opposition to imperialism overseas, particularly from Perot and Buchanan. You had concern about globalization—from Perot and Buchanan—and you also had concern about the deficit, from McCain and Perot. All three urged campaign-finance reform. McCain and Perot ran against the religious right far more articulately and courageously than Democrats ever have. It would be alien to the Democrats to think that they should be courting a whole lot of people from the Republican side. But if you're going to form a national progressive majority, you've got to attract members of the G.O.P. who have favored progressive presidential candidates and themes.

that wing of the party is tiny. The moderates you're talking about—the quintessential progressives of the earlier part of the twentieth century—are now Democrats. There are very few Rockefeller Republican types left.

PHILLIPS: Ross Perot won 19 percent of the national vote, and in some states he won 25, 30 percent of the vote. These votes were pulled mostly out of the Republican coalition. In the 2000 primary, McCain was able to beat George W. Bush in several states, partly by attacking corporate misbehavior and Republican tax policies, and by blasting the religious right.

[illegible]: Kevin, do you see the Republican backlash against the religious right as happening on libertarian grounds?

PHILLIPS: No, no, I see it on more cultural grounds. If moderate Republicans have one thing besides Iraq that makes them want to vote against Bush, it's all these fundamentalists coming out of the woodwork from Armpit, Alabama. It's this biblical worldview in which Baghdad is the new Babylon. The average Presbyterian Republican in suburbia thinks those people are wackos.

LAPHAM: Are there really enough Republican dissidents to form the critical mass in a new progressive majority?

PHILLIPS: Maybe only 15 to 20 percent of the Bush coalition, but it would be a big swing. And the other thing to remember about the three dissident Republican candidates is that they all succeeded in increasing electoral participation, especially Perot. Perot increased voter turnout from 50 to 55 percent. Jesse Ventura raised turnout in Minnesota too. No liberal movement could possibly increase turnout to that extent, but populist conservatism can. The type of person who can command a major-party nomination is more likely to be a conservative populist who can get the turnout up.

PIVEN: But there is the real danger that, for progressives to appeal to the constituencies of Ross Perot or Pat Buchanan, they would have to adopt the not-very-progressive aspects of those candidates' messages—their isolationism or xenophobia, for example.

HILLS: All I'm saying is that it's the one form of insurgent politics that can get a nomination and boost turnout. And if our turnout were to increase to 65 percent, just the lower-income and lower-middle-income bias of that extra 15 percent would change the calculus of our elections.

DANIELS: We'd have the whole ball game back.

PHILLIPS: Obviously you would need a party that stood for something that these people don't see either party as standing for anymore. The nonvoters who could be swayed are, I would venture to say, people who today would say—rightly—that there is no longer a party of Roosevelt or Truman.

## III. WHERE FROM HERE?

LAPHAM: How do progressives build a thirty-year movement in the same way that conservatives did during the 1960s and 1970s?

PIVEN: The left has a communication problem. The right has multiple modes of communication. They have enormous influence with the corporate media; they have their think tanks, which have evolved into propaganda machines; and they also have the social movements of the right—God, gays, and guns. All the left has are its social movements. But they have tremendous communicative power. Think of the abolitionists, the labor movement, the civil rights movement. These kinds of movements get a lot of people on the street. They disrupt things. And that attracts a lot of attention.

FONER: I think what Kevin said before is probably right: some of the progressive issues mentioned here wouldn't attract anywhere near a majority of Americans today. But we have to put those issues out on the table. To insist on a living wage or to demand international justice is not going to win an electoral majority yet, but that doesn't mean it's any less important to stage the protests. If you can change the nature of the public discourse, then the politics will follow.

LAPHAM: How do you change the public discourse, Eric? I admire the phrase, but how does it actually happen?

FONER: You don't start off as if you're running for office and say, we can't get elected on these issues and therefore we had better compromise immediately.

DANIELS: We can't have a strategy based on analysis about who is a "probable voter" and who isn't. Right now we're losing the battle of ideas, because we haven't learned how to translate those ideas into words that draw a crowd.

FONER: If you look at history, when these big political shifts take place, they don't come from out of the blue. Specific crises, whether the slavery issue in the 1850s or the economic crisis of the Great Depression, shatter the boundaries of political dialogue, but there is always a long period of ideological gestation. The abolitionists were not a very large group, but they had a tremendous impact in changing northern opinion about slavery, long before that change was reflected in politics. So one of the things that progressives need to concentrate on, I think, is the formulation of a new set of perspectives, rather than simply worrying about the next election.

LAPHAM: Do we look for those new perspectives inside or outside the Democratic Party?

NADER: I don't think that the Democratic Party can be helped to regenerate itself. It has succumbed to the politics of money, trying to buy its future instead of earning it with the politics of organization. The Democrats are not connecting to people and showing them how politics can deliver for them, the way the city machines used to. They have forgotten the historical lesson that mass movements require mass numbers of organizers in the field. It was required for civil rights; it was required for the union movement; it was required for the women's suffrage movement. In 1993, how many full-time organizers did the Clinton-Gore forces have on the ground behind their so-called national health-care plan? I never counted more than twenty-five, and most of them were on leave from labor unions and citizen groups.



FONER: But I think you're asking too much of the Democratic Party, or of any political party, when you ask why they aren't out in the streets organizing and mobilizing people. That kind of thing is usually done by social movements, not by political parties.

NADER: When I was talking about the Democratic Party, I was also talking about its allies, like labor unions and minority groups.

[illegible] the civil rights movement, and to the women's movement, and to the labor movement. [illegible] those movements, not their point of origin. In 1933 the Democrats were regenerated by the labor movement, but that movement had been too weakened by the Depression to emerge during the '32 campaign. Once in power, though, FDR and the Democrats in Congress were sufficiently alert to those working-class votes to include the right to organize in the first national Industrial Recovery Act. Although this right to organize was puff, and there was no enforcement, it communicated to workers the good news that someday soon they might get a real right to organize. It gave what had been a very weak labor movement a real jolt, and, as that labor movement grew, it then put pressure on FDR for further legislation.

FONER: Also, when Roosevelt came into office in '32—and obviously, anybody could have won for the Democrats in '32—there was a whole set of ideas about economic policy available to him that had been developed over the previous quarter of a century. Again, politics followed what was happening in society.

NADER: Today, though, the outside groups supporting the Democratic Party don't have any leverage at all. Groups like the Sierra Club, the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, are so desperate for Kerry to win that they are making no demands on him.

FONER: Clearly that's a big mistake. But for the foreseeable future, the Democratic Party is going to be the organization that the elements of any kind of progressive coalition will identify with politically. Whatever the desire of black voters for an alternative, they're going to keep voting Democratic. The same is true of labor—small as it is nowadays, but still important—and of the women's movement. Given the nature of our political system, it seems highly unlikely that we can re-create the circumstances of the 1850s, when one of the two major parties disappeared altogether and a new one took its place. That's the last time that such a thing happened in American history. It seems to me that progressives should be fighting for their position in the Democratic Party, because for better or worse, we're going to be stuck with it.

NADER: The only hope for the Democratic Party, it seems to me, depends on the replacement of its leadership—at all levels. The Democrats need a whole new generation of people. There has to be a rupture, in effect, a takeover at the precinct level. Which is where the party can be captured, because there's so much apathy at the precinct level.

FONER: I certainly don't think we should abandon a critical stance toward the party. My point is that although some of the worst elements in American society are in the Democratic Party, so are some of the best. And those should not be written off.

PIVEN: I agree. The Democratic Party will never change without social movements that threaten it from the outside. But there will also have to be party politicians who are willing to respond to movement demands.

DANIELS: And what we don't have right now is the outside piece of that equation. With the Rainbow Coalition, I think our tactical mistake was to take all that energy inside the party. You've got to have pressure from the outside to keep the inside honest. And that is where some of the independent campaigns play a part. Independent campaigns can put forward new issues and compel new voters. This is what happened with Perot. For two years or so, all the politicians went to Dallas to beg him for his 19 percent. That was a huge bloc of votes outside of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

FONER: Perot also had a few billion dollars that Jesse Jackson didn't have.

DANIELS: But I think Jesse made up for the lack of money with the politics of organization.

LAPHAM: What kind of exterior force—think tank, social movement, grassroots political campaign—could attract some of the disaffected Republicans?

PHILLIPS: None that now exists. The structure for mediating between the Democratic progressive community and the Republican progressive, or populist, community—or whatever one would call it—doesn't really exist. A lot of independent-leaning Republican voters are unhappy with Bush on a lot of issues that are compatible with the Democratic side. But there's no institutional force; nothing to manage it, to mold it. The Democrats seem entirely unaware of the fact that the two parties have areas of overlap. Pat Buchanan beat Bob Dole in the New Hampshire primary on jobs and corporations; John McCain won in Michigan by raising concerns about the Republican Party and the religious right. So there's obviously a big group of votes there. But the Democratic progressive community has essentially no lines of communication to it.

DANIELS: We need an organization, even if it's not a party, that can serve as a catalyst in American politics. It could support progressive or moderate Republicans in critical situations, but could also be advancing progressive Democrats. It also would have the capacity to sponsor independent candidates in municipal or state elections, while still supporting the Democrats for national office. We may not be that enamored of the Democratic Party, but we can't afford to abandon it yet. Because the alternative is George Bush, which is nobody's idea of a progressive movement. ■

# ET IN ARCADIA EGO

*By John Berger*

Scandinavia is sparsely populated, and when its inhabitants live closely side by side or come together to form a crowd, they resist becoming a mass. In the strict physical sense of the term, they remain incoherent. This reluctance to merge, or this need to remain separate, is not a simple expression of individualism, for the same people are in other ways obedient, civic-minded, and conventional. The Calvinist conscience may have something to do with it. But there is something else too, which is not in the least Calvinist. They all inherit a certain ideal of a wayward happiness, an ideal sustained by a shared memory, partly invented, partly true, of childhood summers, of sun and water and of days that never end. All cultures invent their own Arcadia, but this arcadia is closely connected with the region's climate and geography. Its winters are intolerably long and dark, and annually the two months of summer, with their more or less white nights—depending upon the exact longitude—are like a physically earned reward, and are like a declaration of innocence.



As I write these words, I suddenly think of the paintings Sven made ten years ago on the island of Belle-Isle, off the coast of Brittany. Naked bodies, surf, saltwater sluicing off rocks, a sparkling sunlight touching everything, no end in sight. They are, in fact, images of that wayward happiness and those childhood summers.

In the Scandinavian summer, people of all ages take off as many clothes as their self-respect permits, so that the three innocences of sunlight, water, and rewarded bodies can touch.

I came to Stockholm to attend his funeral.

We were friends during fifty years and we did many things together. We mended roofs. We cooked. We collaborated on books. We traveled. We mixed cement. We went to demonstrations. Sometimes we read the same book in the same week so as to discuss it. What Sven was politically has not yet been named—maybe it will be in the next twenty years when the world transformations taking place are better understood. For want of a better term, he accepted being called anarchist. Had he been labeled a terrorist today, he would have shrugged his shoulders.

He had a trundling walk, as if his torso were riding a camel. He spoke rather slowly and his voice was exceptionally reassuring—the voice of a man whispering to you in confidence that a cease-fire has been announced.

*John Berger's most recent book is* Selected Essays; *his novel* Here Is Where We Meet *will be published by Pantheon next year.*

particularly [illegible]
tinguish quality [illegible]
Although [illegible]

Stockholm, to look at paintings we had once looked at together. There [illegible] Berthe Morisot landscape he particularly liked. It's painted like the inside of a dress, he said, the inside of a dress touching the skin!

The summer of exactly forty years ago was the first time I lived for several months in Sven and Romaine's house in the Vaucluse. Their daughter Karin had just been born. The house, with two fig trees, surrounded by cherry and apricot orchards, was primitive, there was no electricity and no tap water. There was collected rainwater for washing in, and the drinking water we fetched from a fountain in the village. The cooking we did on a hearth in the kitchen. At midday when it was hot the chickens came into the kitchen for shade. There were also two dogs. Romaine worked outside, chiseling local stone and making sculptures. She was often covered with white dust. Sven painted in a kind of upstairs shed. The one luxury of the four-roomed house was a library—a room lined with books belonging to Sven—where I worked. All the money we had was kept in a bowl on the mantelpiece above the hearth in the kitchen. Everywhere the sound of cicadas and at night the screech of owls. It was not at all Scandinavian, but Sven brought his arcadia with him, and in July and August we paid the price, since more and more visitors came and did not want to leave. They slept in the grass or put up tents.

Sven and I cooked and served the evening meal. We had only enamel plates because they were easier for stacking and did not break. People [illegible] essors, doctors, art historians, ar- [illegible] such was Sven's presence, welcome, and [illegible] (by accident) into Paradise.

Seven visitors have been here [illegible] mother carload coming along the dirt-track which leads to the house. The house had formerly belonged to an old peasant who, when he was dying, gave it to Sven to cheat the State. I look at my watch. We'll have Menu C tonight, Sven says to me confidentially. I'll light the fire, you go!

Menu C means that I drive to the public rubbish dump in Cavaillon and pick out the still edible vegetables and fruit, thrown away when the market closed. Before leaving the kitchen I take money from the bowl to buy bread.

In the National Museum was a Rembrandt which I'd never seen before and which wasn't there when we went round the museum together. The subject is Simeon, the old man, presenting the infant Jesus in the Temple. Soon he will say his famous Nunc Dimittis.

My wanting to try to do a drawing of the painting had nothing, however, to do with words. I simply wanted to look closer at the way the swaddled child was lying like a fish across the old man's outstretched forearms, with the thumbs and eight fingers of the two hands almost but not quite touching.

Sven was a full-time painter for more than sixty years, and during that time he sold fewer paintings than any other artist I've ever known. As a result, he faced considerable material difficulties. He always lacked money. Most of his life he lacked what the most modest painter would think of as a proper studio. And, except by a few friends, he was unrecognized. Nevertheless, scarcely a day passed when he did not pick up a brush, pastel, or pen to work, and on many days he worked until the hours counted no more, and he stepped into the inno- [illegible] cence of that season where nature ca- [illegible] be taken by surprise.

I always had the impression Sve [illegible] didn't choose his subjects; it wa [illegible] they who placed orders. His subject [illegible] became his patrons: a coastline, [illegible] cherry orchard, a river crossing [illegible] city, a range of mountains, th [illegible] enamled branches of a vine, the fac [illegible] of a friend.

During the last few years, when h [illegible] was suffering from advanced Parkin [illegible] son's disease, his patron, on every [illegible] day he felt strong enough, would b [illegible] a plate of fruit which he arrange [illegible] with his long trembling fingers on [illegible] the corner of a table in the fla [illegible] where he lived with his family in the [illegible] center of Stockholm. Of these frui [illegible] he made still lifes, scarcely large [illegible] than postcards, using oil sticks.

He considered it a waste of time [illegible] to talk of his difficulties because he [illegible] believed in Providence. He counted [illegible] on happy accidents (of course you [illegible] have to recognize them when they [illegible] happen, he points out), the example [illegible] of Pissarro, who had a heart of gold [illegible] as well as being a great painter, un [illegible] expected encounters (a question of [illegible] keeping your eyes open, most people [illegible] don't), and natural mystery. This is [illegible] why on his last, very small, still lifes [illegible] the colors speak to one another. It is [illegible] also why he lived without resent- [illegible] ment. He could become angry but he [illegible] personally resented nothing. And [illegible] when he listened to Bach, his belief [illegible] in Providence was deeply confirmed.

Those who disapproved of Sven [illegible] thought him pigheaded. He never [illegible] retracted, he never openly changed [illegible] an opinion. He continually edged [illegible] forward. Even during the final [illegible] months when, unassisted, he could [illegible] only move forward twenty centime- [illegible] ters by twenty centimeters, and five [illegible] meters was an impossibly long dis- [illegible] tance, he continually edged forward, [illegible] or else he rested, with his eyes shut, [illegible] until he found the strength to do so. [illegible] Others disapproved of him because [illegible] he devoted his whole life to art, and [illegible] they saw he was not a genius. For [illegible] them, the nobility of that persistence [illegible] passed unnoticed.

He died, alone, of a heart attack, a [illegible] few meters away from the table where [illegible] he arranged the little plates of fruit for

s still lifes. It was the longest day of e year, the twenty-first of June, 2003. 'hen his body was discovered, the days were already getting minimally shorter.

The funeral was to take place at 00 P.M. in a southern suburb called :ogskyrkogården. We decided to ke the metro and eat a sandwich ere before going to the designated apel. After half an hour's wait a ain arrives and we climb in. All the en are in shorts and the women ve bare shoulders. It is very hot. hrough the coach, as it rocks on its ay with all its windows open, wafts tolerance for clumsy love, inele- nce, missed opportunities, freckled cks, strange murmurs, sweaty hair, ot feet, and life as it is.

Where we arrive there are two ower shops and a cemetery which pears to go on forever. We each y a rose to place on the coffin. here is nowhere to buy anything to t. For that we have to take the etro back to the last station, which at the beginning of the cemetery.

This is what we do. More flower ops, and in front of them a com- ex of modern flats, built around a wned square. By the entrance to is inner square I spot a sign an- ouncing a restaurant, with an ar- w. We follow it, hoping to find a ndwich. Many tables and a self- rvice counter. A menu of boiled ake with white sauce and boiled otatoes. A big display of sweet kes and colored pastries like toys, om which to choose a dessert. Cof- e. Tea. Apple juice or what they ll *small beer* (2 percent alcohol). lany of the people in the waiting ueue have sticks. Everything in the nteen is white, glossy white—like white metal drawer for cutlery. nd there is a faint smell of rubber bing. Three more clients arrive in heelchairs. The man behind me, as hesitate about what to drink, says: mall beer is better than nothing!

A few minutes later I notice a an and a woman in white uniforms earing plastic gloves and carrying rip-feed bottles, and I put two and wo together. We are in the canteen or flats which are reserved for old eople who, thanks to the medical aid on the spot, still manage to live by themselves. And the canteen, which is available to them for their meals, is also open to the public.

Each one has chosen to sit at a different table. They preserve their independence like passengers in a station waiting room. Their common destination is behind the florists across the road.

They keep their eyes lowered, studying what is on their plates. To watch day by day the evident solitude of each of the others is probably harder to bear than one's own solitude. The one exception is the small-beer man who wanders from table to table, repeating: Another hot day! and then, grinning, decides to join us at our table just as we are on the point of leaving so as not to be late for the funeral.

Outside the air is as hot as a panting horse's breath, and the cemetery and its stillness extend as far as the eye can see.

After the funeral, the hundred or so people attending were invited to a buffet meal in the garden, outside the building in which Sven had been allotted a municipal studio. At one moment I left the garden and opened the door I remembered on the ground floor. The studio was uncannily tidy. The tidiness bespoke his absence. There was nothing on the easel. A number of canvases were visible instead of being face to the wall; the strong ones looked stronger, and the weaker ones looked desolate. What astounded me most, however, was the large reproduction pinned at eye level to the wall which was facing the easel. It was the Rembrandt Simeon.

I rejoined the family and guests drinking wine in the garden, and asked about the reproduction, but nobody was sure when Sven had acquired it and pinned it there. It is thought to be the last painting Rembrandt worked on.

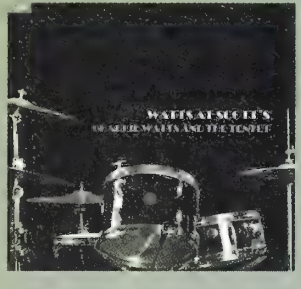
The day after the funeral we drove north toward the archipelago on an old Yamaha 550cc. bike which a Swedish friend had lent me. The archipelago, with its abundance of islands, straits, sounds, peninsulas, and


THE BLUE NILE
HIGH



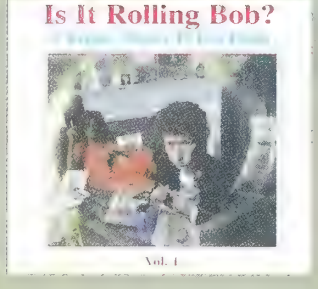

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bays, somehow [illegible] self to being the dream [illegible] hoods contain nautical skills and a [illegible] dreamlike, and it's through these practices, through the [illegible] archipelago and every man over [illegible] which pretends he was once a sea captain.

[illegible] north for the island of Furusund, which is three km long and about one km wide.

At the southeast corner of the island there's a landing stage, a shop, a café, and many fair-haired, bare-legged giants—both women and men—who lick ice creams very slowly, read the sky, fill up their launches with petrol, carry their towels to take showers because they've been swimming far out at sea, and let their toddlers in life jackets pace the decks of their boats unaccompanied.

It is late afternoon. Beside us a sea captain in shorts has offered an ice cream to a young boy whom I noticed playing with a football. He has very smart feet.

I saw a moose this morning, says the boy to the captain.

I doubt it at this time of year.

I did.

How many branches did it have?

I didn't have time to count—it ran off.

At this point the two of them stop and look toward the water. A ship has appeared sailing north along the channel between Furusund and Yxlan.

The scale of this ship is unthinkable. She is taller than four forests placed one on top of the other. She passes silently, as if her improbability has been able to pierce the visible but not the audible. She will arrive in Helsinki tomorrow morning just after the sun has lit up a four-story yellow building there, before which she will dock.

How did your moose get on the island? asks the sea captain.

It swam, replies the boy, must have swum.

Moose move around in herds. They are not loners, and they don't [illegible]

[illegible] I saw him between the trees, he [illegible] old one.

I join the people, the children, and the dogs on the quayside. All of them are standing and looking up with astonishment at the improbably large and silent white ship, an astonishment which is habitual, for the same [illegible] ship passes every evening at the same hour.

I traveled on this line fifteen years ago. And I [illegible] the ship by the four-story yellow building in Helsinki. I was writing a novel then, and I incorporated the ship into the story. I described her as the vessel which transports the dead across the Styx.

If we knew how our stories risk to catch up with us, would we write differently? I think not. But at that moment on the ship, I, as storyteller, was the decider of destinies. I was the navigator. I might even have been invited onto the captain's bridge! Whereas now on the island of Furusund I look up at the same ship passing and feel as small as everyone else. The few passengers on deck look down at us from something like the height of a suspension bridge. And only I know that Sven is on board.

I walk between some birches, listen to the special sound the leaves of trees make when they are growing beside saltwater. Then I return to the café.

Is the weather going to stay the same? the boy is asking the captain.

Yes, it'll be fine tomorrow.

Tomorrow I'm going to look for the moose before the sun's up.

The white ship has passed the northern point of Furusund and has vanished.

A week later in the Haute-Savoie. I am cooking fish on a wood fire outside and my son, Yves, brings me a glass of wine to drink and holds out a bowl of olives. It's getting dark and my eyes are sore from the smoke, so I feel for a couple with my fingers without looking, and pop one into my mouth. As I spit out the stone and t[illegible] black, Greek—a thought crosses m[illegible] mind. From now on I taste olives f[illegible] Sven too.

[illegible]

And suddenly, rubbing my eyes, remember: Sven and I first met [illegible] chance and swapped addresses in large Poussin exhibition in Lond[illegible] where, among many others, th[illegible] painting *Et in Arcadia ego* was hang[illegible] ing. The canvas shows a shepherde[illegible] and three arcadian shepherd[illegible] brought up short by a tomb, which [illegible] the last thing they were expecting t[illegible] come upon there. One of them [illegible] reading out the inscription on th[illegible] gravestone to the others.

Wonderful! Sven said with h[illegible] hair standing on end. Everything i[illegible] the painting leads the eye to th[illegible] shadow of the arm of the one who[illegible] reading the words! You see? Th[illegible] shadow here! And he pointed.

### August Index Sources

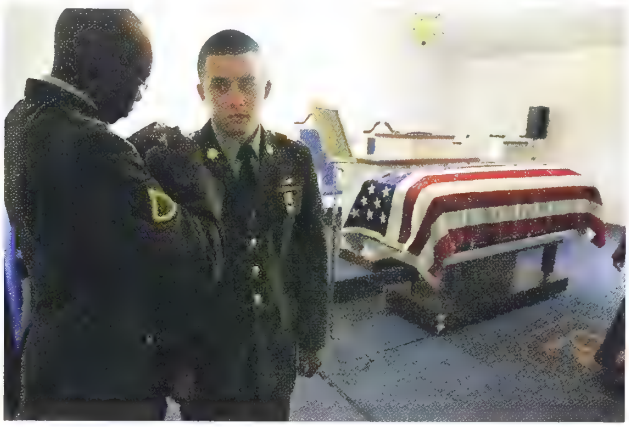
**1,2** World Trade Centers Associatio[illegible] (N.Y.C.); **3** New York Army Nation[illegible] Guard (N.Y.C.); **4** Texas Army Natio[illegible] al Guard (Austin); **5–8** The Gallup O[illegible] ganization (Princeton, N.J.); **9** U.S. G[illegible] ological Survey (Denver); **10** O[illegible] Depletion Analysis Centre (London [illegible] **11** The British Museum (London [illegible] **12,13** Coalition Provisional Authorit[illegible] (Baghdad); **14** Bell Environmental Se[illegible] vices, Inc. (Parsippany, N.J.); **15,1**[illegible] *Harper's* research; **17,18** Project o[illegible] Government Oversight (Washington [illegible] *Harper's* research; **19** Good Jobs Fir[illegible] (Washington); **20,21** Center for Amer[illegible] ican Progress (Washington); **22** FF[illegible] (Washington); **23** The Sentencing Pro[illegible] ect (Washington); **24** Rockdale Count[illegible] Court (Conyers, Ga.); **25** Camino [illegible] Canaan (Santiago, Chile); **26** Save th[illegible] Children (Westport, Conn.); **27** "Risk[illegible] Rule, and Reason in Africa," by Arthu[illegible] Goldsmith, Harvard University (Cam[illegible] bridge, Mass.)/*The Economist* (London [illegible] **28** BBC News (London); **29** Endem[illegible] UK (London); **30,31** Seth Stein[illegible] Northwestern University (Evanston[illegible] Ill.); **32** Glen Canyon National Recre[illegible] ation Area (Page, Ariz.); **33** Jeffre[illegible] Lockwood, University of Wyomin[illegible] (Laramie)/American Museum of Natur[illegible] al History (N.Y.C.); **34,35** Baja Beac[illegible] Club (Barcelona, Spain); **36** Pim[illegible] County Sheriff's Office (Tucson, Ariz.) **37–39** Youth Outreach Unit (Blu[illegible] Springs, Mo.).

# THE BEREAVED

## Mourning the dead, in America and Iraq

*By Peter Turnley*









The body of Iraqi soldier Samh-Safeq, twenty, is exhumed for proper burial, Baghdad, April 14, 2003.
Members of a military honor guard prepare for the funeral of Army Staff Sgt. Esau G. Patterson Jr., twenty-five, killed in Baghdad by a car bomb on April 29, 2004.
Relatives of Saddam Mohammed Haidar, twenty-nine, carry his body through the outskirts of Baghdad, May 13, 2003.
The parents of Staff Sgt. Patterson at his funeral in Ridgeland, S.C., May 10, 2004.

Harper's Magazine *contributing editor Peter Turnley is a photographer based in Paris and New York City. He has published four books of photographs, including* Moments of Revolution, Parisians, *and* In Times of War and Peace.





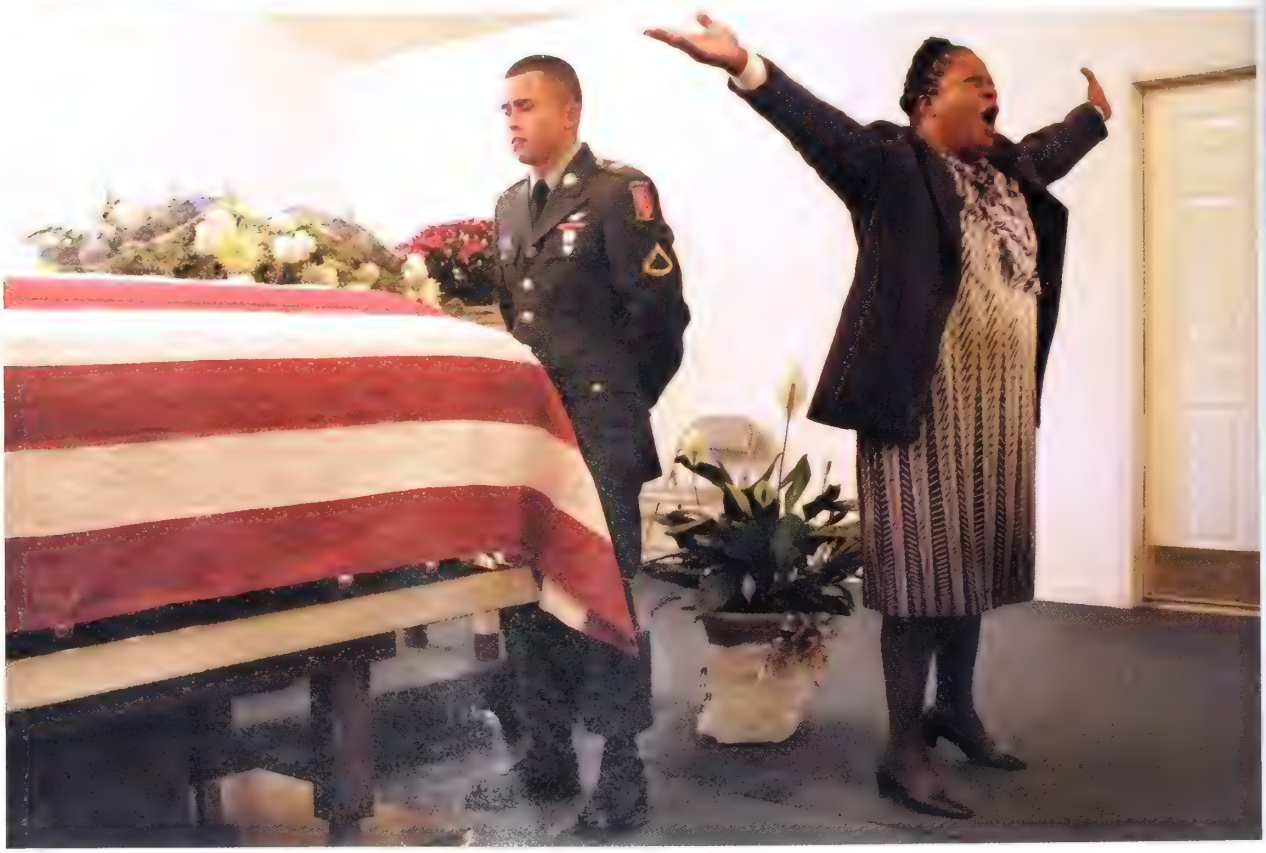
The funeral of Staff Sgt. Patterson.
Funeral services in Pryor, Okla., for Army Spc. Kyle A. Brinlee, twenty-one, killed when his convoy struck an improvised explosive device in Al-Asad, Iraq, on May 11, 2004.





Iraqis pass by a corpse on a side street in Baghdad, April 13, 2003.
At the burial of Abedal Hassn, fifty-three, Baghdad, April 15, 2003.





Bodies of Iraqi fighters at a hospital morgue, Basra, April 8, 2003.
A relative at the wake for Staff Sgt. Patterson.





The casket of Spc. Brimlee at funeral services in a high school auditorium in Pryor, Okla.
At the grave of Abedal Hassn, Baghdad.





Doctors are unable to save Worood Nasiaf, ten, Baghdad, April 14, 2003.
Friends and relatives bury an Iraqi soldier killed on the outskirts of Baghdad, May 14, 2003.

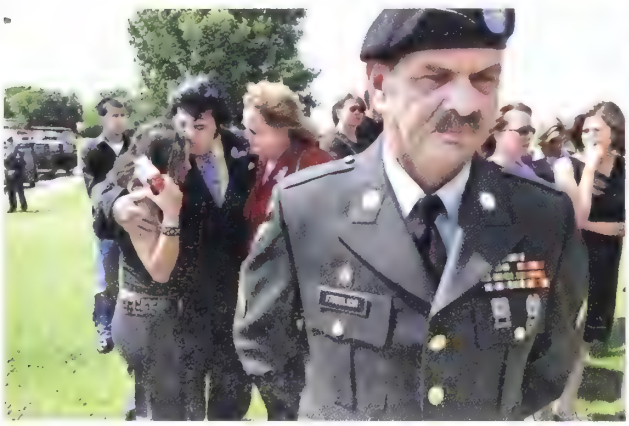




Family members at the El Paso, Tex., funeral of Army Spc. Isela Rubalcava, twenty-five, killed in Mosul, Iraq, on May 8, 2004. Relatives at the wake for Staff Sgt. Patterson.









Friends and relatives arrive to claim the body of an Iraqi fighter, Basra, April 3, 2003 (top left).
Outside the funeral services for Spc. Brinlee (top right, bottom left).
Grieving family members prepare to bury a relative killed in the war, Baghdad, April 15, 2003 (bottom right).

# THE POISON STREAM

## Sacrificing India's poor on the altar of modernity

*By Matthew Power*

The months leading up to the monsoon in Kerala are drawn-out, hot, and lusty; thirst seems to become the base condition of all living things. Menace permeates casual interactions; the bartering session for an auto rickshaw or a bag of tomatoes is dreaded, seething. Stray dogs, their distended udders slack, lie as if melted next to their unconscious litters, the puppies too hot even to touch one another. Whole villages retract into the vast circles of shade cast by the absurdly pink-blossomed acacia trees, and young coconuts, hacked open with sickles and drained of milk, pile up like the severed heads of a vanquished army outside the chai stalls.



It is to this season that I arrive in Kasargod, the northernmost district of India's southwesternmost state, so close to the border with Karnataka that most of the residents speak a dialect of Kannada instead of Kerala's official Malayalam. It was a forty-eight-hour rail journey south from Delhi, through half a dozen climatic zones and a hundred languages. An old Muslim man, prostrate across the aisle, sent evening prayers west toward Mecca. By the grass shacks of Uttar Pradesh, handmade dung-cakes were stacked in geometric perfection, drying for fuel. In the Rajasthani desert, children brought lines of cattle home along dusty roads, and women balanced water pots on their heads as bright saris billowed behind them, their camels laden with watermelons. Everywhere games of cricket were improvised: an old tire for a wicket, a ball made of scrap cloth hit with a bat pried from a fence. From a platform in Agra, an ad promoting cell phones obscured the Taj Mahal.

From the open door of the train I had seen the vast *jhugghis* that spread out from the cities: jerry-built shacks of hammered-flat oil barrels, tattered plastic tarps, salvaged mud-bricks, and liberated billboards advertising Thums-Up or Fair & Lovely, which occupy every available inch of space for miles along the tracks. On the station platforms, mothers with full-blown AIDS reached through the bars of the second-class carriages begging alms. Old men squatted, shitting by the tracks as the train racketed by. Children salvaged scrap aluminum and plastic mineral-water bottles from rivers of sewage. Here were formerly rural people who had fallen beneath the wheels of economic progress, shut out of the "Shining India" promised them in the government's advertisements. They had fled a host of plagues to come to the cities, where at least they would not starve.

The Kasargod station platform greets me like a blast furnace. A goat walking along between tracks stoops to eat a banana peel from a stream of raw sewage. A cow, splattered with the hot-pink dye that celebrates Holi, the Hindu festival of spring, stands nearby and slowly chews a cardboard box. Even the red-shirted coolies, smoking

*Matthew Power is a writer living in Queens, New York, and New Delhi, India*

Photograph by Alyssa Banta

*bris* on a leg [illegible] jumping [illegible]. English papers on the newsstand are full of weird, violent tales: opposition rioters in the state capital, Thiruvananthapuram, have firebombed twelve government vehicles; an entire family [illegible] train and are [illegible] on the spot; [illegible] and sugar; five people were killed after drinking bootleg palm liquor spiked with pesticide. Five years of drought are followed by killing floods. Fifty perish in a bus "mishap." In a country that often seems constructed out of bizarre occurrences and unimaginable sorrows, it is difficult to shock the conscience. Many stories slip through the cracks. If I had happened to pick up a paper here in 1982, perhaps I would have come across the strange story that ultimately led to my journey twenty years later: CALVES BORN WITH WARPED LIMBS.

I have come 1,500 miles from Delhi to visit the tiny, remote hill village of Vaninagar, a place that has been devastated by a spate of mysterious illnesses over the last two decades: rare cancers, birth defects, mental retardation, miscarriages, suicides. Babies that were carried to term were sometimes born blind, or epileptic, or with deformed limbs. Children shriveled and died from leukemia, and old women were covered with lesions that wouldn't heal. In a culture bound by notions of karmic retribution, people naturally assumed it was a curse, that they had angered their *theyyams*, or guardian spirits.

Some of the villagers, however, along with a growing number of scientists, doctors, and environmental groups, have blamed the 4,500-hectare state-owned cashew plantation, which for twenty years conducted aerial spraying of the organochlorine pesticide endosulfan over its cashew crops. The plantation borders dozens of villages and drains into the drinking water of thousands of rural people. The pesticide companies, the plantation management, and the state government have so far refused to accept any

[illegible] ted the purported economic interests of the state's corporations against the [illegible]

India exists in many centuries simultaneously. The glittering software capital of Bangalore is ringed with medieval slums, and blind beggars bearing smallpox scars seek alms next to Bollywood film shoots. India is home to the largest slums in Asia, and by some estimates 100 million people have been displaced by drought, hydroelectric schemes, deforestation, and sectarian violence since Independence. The vast outpouring of relief following the death of 20,000 in an earthquake in Gu-




jarat in 2001 was followed a year later in the same state by the mass slaughter of Muslims in pogroms tacitly encouraged by the government. In Bihar "witches" are still burned to death, and Rajasthani farmers starve on grass seed, while behind barbed wire the Food Corporation of India's godowns are bursting with 60 million tons of surplus grain.

At the station I am met by my friend Vinod, a journalist and native [illegible] explite, who has agreed to serve as translator and guide into the hill coun[illegible] ry. [illegible] est of here. We negotiate a drive and Ambassador car, the ubiquitou[illegible] Indian remake of a 1954 British Mor[illegible] ris. I feel a bit like a holdover from th[illegible] Raj, a mid-level bureaucrat come t[illegible] inspect the coconut plantation. On th[illegible] dashboard is a plastic shrine to Kali-Ma[illegible] the black goddess, tongue stuck ou[illegible] wearing a necklace of severed head[illegible] When the brakes are applied, her eye[illegible] light up red. Vinod chatters away wit[illegible] the driver in Malayalam, a language s[illegible] rounded and elided as to sound, to [illegible] foreign ear, like the same word repeat[illegible] ed over and over again. I watch ou[illegible] the window as we wind up into th[illegible] hills, the temperature easing slightl[illegible] from the oppressiveness of the narro[illegible] coastal plain. The parched red earth[illegible] along the roadside shows the warp [illegible] the last monsoon, weathered an[illegible] smooth as scar tissue.

The state of Kerala runs lik[illegible] a long, green snake between th[illegible] cool heights of the Wester[illegible] Ghats and the depths of th[illegible] Lakshadweep Sea on India[illegible] southwest coast. Its peculiar ge[illegible] ography, blocked by the spin[illegible] of the mountains from India[illegible] central plains and exposed t[illegible] the sea along a 500-mile coast[illegible] line, has set it apart from th[illegible] rest of the subcontinent for mi[illegible] lennia. Kerala was a trading sto[illegible] for the Phoenicians when Bom[illegible] bay and Calcutta were mere fish[illegible] ing villages. Pepper and ivor[illegible] arrived in ancient Rome via it[illegible] shores. It was the point fro[illegible] which Chinese ideas and goo[illegible] first spread west and marke[illegible] landfall for Da Gama's openin[illegible] of south Asia to almost five centuries [illegible] European control. Cardamom, ginge[illegible] turmeric, pepper—all brought trad[illegible] here from far-off empires, which in tur[illegible] introduced coffee, rubber, cocoa. An[illegible] cashew. The laterite, semiarid hills [illegible] northern Kerala are one of the be[illegible] cashew-growing areas in the world.

Kerala's unique culture and its iso[illegible] lation have led to some striking so[illegible] cial and political developments[illegible] Poverty is low and the literacy rate [illegible] 90 percent. In 1957 it voted in th[illegible] world's first freely elected communis[illegible] government. Political activism cor[illegible]

Map by Anne Wirkk[illegible]

ues, and the state is frequently rupted by general strikes, called *tals*, led by whichever party haps to be in opposition. Now Ker-'s chief industry is tourism. "God's n Country" tout the brochures, ing Israeli backpackers and









itish package-tourists to the hypitically swaying palm trees of its aches. But there is a dark aspect, lident not only in the political vience that erupts periodically ross the state but in the institunalized corruption that governs most every official interaction, m traffic tickets to the registran and use of pesticides.

We stop at a chai shop an hour up to the hills, a wooden shack with a oken table and a few wobbly benches. A group of local men stare as we alk in and order tea and *kesari*, a eet, primary-yellow wheat pudding. cricket game blares on a transistor ra-, and I stare at Technicolor posters Shiva and the romance of Krishna d Radha. The proprietor chats to inod while performing acrobatic nts with the chai, pouring it from ie container to another at full arm's ngth to cool it off. He tips his head toard me, asks a question. In the flow of eir conversation, which has shifted to e equally unintelligible Kannada, a ord I recognize pops up: endosulfan. The man quickly pours the tea, glaring at me, and turns to the other customers. Vinod just smiles and blows on his chai.

The ancient gearbox of the Ambassador protests on the rockier sections of the rutted dirt road. We pass through plantations of tall, thin areca palms, from which the dark red betel nut chewed in the mildly narcotic *paan* is harvested. To harvest areca the pickers will bind their feet with a loop of cloth called a *thorth*, pressing their soles against the slim trunk as they inch forty feet into the air. They keep a sprig of *thulasi*, a sacred native medicinal plant, pressed behind their ears to maintain balance. Having cut all the areca from a given tree, they shift their weight and bend the entire palm over until they can grab onto the next one, working their way down the rows without returning to the ground.

I get my first glimpse of a ripe, lipstick-red bunch of cashews hanging directly over the road, the gray seed pods hanging disembodied, like question marks, below the bulging, vaguely obscene fruit. An old woman, stooped below a huge load of firewood, stops without straightening or looking as we pass. Glancing back, I see her head tilt to the side, and a blood-red gout of *paan* spit arcs into the red dust. We pull up to the low, tree-shaded house of Sree Padre, a local farmer and activist who was one of the first to bring attention to the strange illnesses in the district. As we walk up to the shade of the porch, the stout, mustachioed Padre comes outside and extends his hand. "I got your message," he says, smiling. "I was hoping you wouldn't come."

We sit on the porch, and Padre serves us a plate of *kokum*, a fruit endemic to southwestern India that I've never seen before. It has a thick peel, which stains the fingers an indelible magenta, and inside segments of intensely tart white pulp surround large seeds. In the sun-scorched courtyard, spread-out piles of cashew, areca, and turmeric cure. I ask about the maladies that have been affecting the locals.

The first clues came in the early 1980s. Some calves in a nearby village were born with deformed limbs. Most died quickly, but one survived, and Padre wrote an article about it for a local newspaper. Other effects were slow to manifest themselves: fish, frogs, insects, honeybees, even crows vanished from the area. Then people came down with strange illnesses: warped limbs, weeping sores, cancer. The locals thought only that they were cursed, that Jatadhari, a regional deity, had been displeased with their worship. Witch doctors were hired by many villagers with diseased children to perform ritual purifications.

Padre suspected some sort of chemical poisoning, but it took years to connect the dots: the cows had grazed in the cashew plantation, and drank out of the stream below it. For more than twenty years the Plantation Corporation of Kerala (PCK) had used helicopters to spray endosulfan, two or three times a season. The cashew orchards were mostly on the hilltops, and the land was so undulating that the helicopters sprayed from far too high, causing a drift of pesticide that reached far beyond the plantation's boundaries. Five thousand people live within a stone's throw of the plantation. Disease

otographs by Alyssa Banta (top left and right, bottom right), l Matthew Power (bottom left)

reports have come in from twenty villages, with the majority of the victims under twenty-five. "No one knows how many have died," Padre says.

In the late 1990s, Padre and the only local doctor, Mohan Kumar, began getting a clear picture of the region's health problems, and focused on endosulfan as the probable cause.











When they made enough noise about the spraying in the local press, and pictures of deformed children were broadcast across the country, the slow beast of government was stirred into action. After a great deal of legal wrangling, a hold was placed on aerial spraying. Today the pesticide has been temporarily banned by Kerala's High Court, pending the release of a governmental committee's decision on its health risks. India's $850-million-a-year pesticide industry has taken great interest in the verdict.

Endosulfan is most dangerous to agricultural workers who have direct contact with it, and in the United States the Environmental Protection Agency mandates extensive protective measures: respirators, goggles, the covering of all exposed skin. In India, as with most of the developing world, such measures are almost never put into practice. As Satish Chandra Nair, an Indian ecologist I spoke to, put it: "If you want to make a horror movie, some sort of Franken-

It is a tragedy that is played out in the remotest corners of the developing world, where many of the trappings of Western luxury are grown. From the flower fields of Colombia to the cocoa plantations of Ivory Coast, traditional rural populations are coming into conflict with a host of organic molecules promoted for the betterment of humanity, and the double helix wound between progress and tradition is undergoing nightmarish mutations. The World Health Organization estimates that 3 million people a year, largely in the agricultural Third World, suffer the effects of pesticide poisoning, and that it causes 220,000 deaths. Two boys in South Africa died last year after touching goats that had been treated with endosulfan; a few years ago there were thirty-seven deaths recorded in Benin among farmers who used the pesticide on their crops with no protection. Vaninagar is just one of a thousand villages around the world haunted by the specter of slow poisoning, what came to be known among Indian environmentalists as "silent Bhopals."

In a show of bureaucratic force, the central government has sent eight committees to the area to assess the situation in Kasargod. Padre is weary of seeing no lasting results, weary of people coming and leaving without doing anything to help. The

web of government interests in the matter is almost impossible to unravel: endosulfan's largest manufacturer, Hindustan Insecticides, Ltd., is owned by the government. The government's Central Insecticides Board is in charge of registering and approving all pesticides. The state

*The train had pulled me through there too. The platform of Bhopal station at 4 A.M. was littered with ghosts like the rush of air before an oncoming train. It was just after midnight, December 13, 1984, when an explosion at a Union Carbide pesticide plant adjacent to the station sent a cloud of vaporized methyl isocyanate, heavier than air, billowing across this very platform. Hundreds died within the station, hundreds more on an express that had pulled in to meet the cloud. Rescuers found them piled like trees felled by a hurricane: porters splayed among mounds of luggage, chai boys next to spilled tiffins, a still-living infant suckling at its dead mother's breast. Fifteen thousand were left dead, half a million blind, mad, crippled. It was biblical, the angel of death over Pesach, but there was no way to signal one's right to be spared. The lives lost and ruined at Bhopal were casualties in the inexorable march of progress that would bring India kicking into modernity.*

Photographs by Matthew Lewis (colour images, top left and right, and

ned Plantation Corporation of rala conducted the spraying. An pert committee" has been formed the government to put a final ver- t on endosulfan, but its capacity objectivity has been met with p skepticism by locals.

One of the few independent orga- ations to study the issue, a New lhi–based NGO, the Centre for Sci- ce and Environment, visited the thills in January 2001. They col- ted dozens of samples including well ter, soil, cow's milk, and human od, and tested them for the presence endosulfan residues. What they nd were levels in water 50 times e MRL (the maximum residue lim- set by the U.S. EPA), levels in soil 0 times the MRL, and levels in hu- an blood (for which there is no RL) up to 900 times the MRL for ter. "The values were alarming," d a CSE researcher at the time. "It n hardly be doubted that this has nething to do with the high inci- nce of disorders of the central ner- us system in the village." To all ap- arances, this was the smoking gun: not direct proof, then a clear indi- tion of the cause of the health ca- tastrophe visiting the plan- tation's surrounding areas.

Dr. O. P. Dubey, assistant di- ctor general of the Indian Council Agricultural Research and a ember of the Central Insecticides oard, heads the committee that ill decide the fate of endosulfan. r. Dubey, in his cluttered office in warren of hallways in one of the ountless ministry buildings in New elhi, derides the CSE study as awed. "I think the CSE's results are rong, totally wrong. You have to ove a link, and no link has been oven. The cases there reflect a po- tical agenda, nothing else. This umar and Padre, they want chari- , that's why they make an issue of is. Padre, with his rosy cheeks, oks as healthy as an American." espite being appointed head of a ommittee to evaluate the safety of pesticide he himself has approved d promoted, Dubey does not per- eive a conflict of interest. It is a ealthy sign of bureaucratic trans- arency. When asked for an alterna- tive theory of the illnesses in Vani- nagar, he shrugs. "I think it is be- cause these people are not taking nutritious food." This is a retreat from his earlier claim, widely report- ed in the Indian press, that the cause of the diseases in Kasargod district was inbreeding and the chewing of betel nut.

Dubey is fond of metaphors and uses them vigorously to defend the use of pesticides. "It is like if a train wrecks, you are compensated, people with broken limbs go to hos- pital, we take corrective measures. Do we stop the train running?" When it is pointed out that his committee will appear to undo "cor- rective measures" by recommending the endosulfan ban be lifted, he tries another metaphor. "Think of it like aspirin. Aspirin you take for a headache. If you take ten tablets, you will collapse." As Dubey sees it, it is a simple calculus: 35 percent of crop loss is due to pests. Without chemicals, India would be unable to feed itself. India is home to more than a billion people, a vast number of whom live on less than a dollar a day, and 700 million of them de- pend on agriculture to survive. When he released his report last August, he recommended that en- dosulfan be exonerated.

Endosulfan is a neurotoxin devel- oped in the 1950s by the German chemical giant Hoechst. It is used in the Third World as a cheap replace- ment for persistent organic pollutants like DDT, Heptachlor, and Dieldrin, which are widely banned. Endosulfan itself is banned or severely restricted in some thirty-one countries, from envi- ronmental progressives such as Ger- many, the U.K., the Netherlands, and Sweden to developing tropical coun- tries like Belize, Sri Lanka, Colombia, and Cambodia. The EPA classifies it as highly hazardous, due to its acute tox- icity. The chemical absorbs easily through the skin, lungs, and stomach, and studies have shown that long-term exposure, even at low levels, causes damage particularly to the central ner- vous system, kidneys, liver, and the developing fetus. It is also suspected to be an endocrine disrupter, a mole- cule that by its shape mimics estrogen in the body, bringing with it a host of reproductive problems, from sterility and infertility to testicular and prostate cancer.

From the window of the Ambas- sador I see the village of Vaninagar spread out beneath in a bowl of red earth. The low hills wallow to the hori- zon, a dusty green and undulating topography. Our driver pulls up in front of a low wooden shed, screened off in the front. A hand-painted white sign with a red cross advertises Y. Mohana Kumar, M.D. The doctor is in, at- tending a child, so we sit in folding chairs by the doorway. His patient is a tiny girl, perhaps five, with dark eyes. She has a wool hat on, despite the heat. Kumar listens to the child's breathing through a stethoscope, his hand spanning the width of her shoul- der blades as the other presses the res- onator to her chest. Everything is still for several seconds, only the faint whir of the ceiling fan and the distant pulse of insects. The doctor says a few words to the father in Tulu, a local dialect, and he takes the girl's hand as they walk off. "*Thulasi* and honey, I recom- mended. Excellent for colds."

He sits at his desk, which is clut- tered with handwritten patients' records and medical books. Behind him is a glass cabinet of prescription medicines, and a refrigerator stocked with antibiotics and insulin hums next to it. Kumar is handsome, with a neat- ly trimmed mustache and a weary grin. "Three years of stress has done this," he says, tousling his graying hair. I ask him about his practice. Out of a village of 4,000, he knows perhaps half by name. He is the first doctor ever to have been born and raised in this vil- lage, and certainly no one is as famil- iar with the locals. While we talk a woman comes in. She has a worried, sun-creased face and speaks to him in hushed tones. He opens the cabinet, pulls out a bottle of pills, and drops a few into a piece of newspaper, which he folds into a neat packet. She hands him a weathered 10-rupee note from a fold in her sari. She leaves, and Kumar turns to me. "Her son has epilepsy and cerebral palsy. She comes in for pills when his condition deteriorates."

It is a scene that repeats itself throughout the afternoon: villager after villager comes to the doctor's

cerous lesions in her mouth, a mother who has two sons with mental re-
talks to the doctor, leaves without meeting my eyes. "Issueless," he says, wobbling his head in the Indian fashion, which can mean almost anything. In this case, Kumar means she has
children.

Dr. Kumar began to notice disease rates climbing in the village more than a decade ago, especially among villagers living along two streams that run through the area, the Kodenkiri and the Swarga. Swarga means "heaven" in Kannada. The streams are the lifelines of the village. People drink, bathe, and use them for cooking. In many parts of the hill country, they are the only available source of water. Unable to fly at the prescribed 2-meter height above the trees, the helicopters had sprayed from much higher, and the endosulfan settled across a wide, populated area. "The law states that before aerial spraying, the PCK must cover all water sources that can be affected by the pesticide drift. You tell me," Kumar demanded, "how can you cover a stream?"

The remoteness of the area has stymied any comprehensive gathering of population and health statistics. "Nobody has done proper research, these people are spread out all over the countryside, there's no census, people don't know someone a mile away," he tells me. People in the countryside build funeral pyres for their dead on their own land. Some lives, particularly miscarriages, are never accounted for. As the only doctor in the village, he was in the best, perhaps the only, position to observe and catalogue the maladies that had descended upon the population. There were multiple cases of cancer, retardation, epilepsy, and birth defects. A six-year-old died of blood cancer. Kumar holds his hands out, as if describing the swell of a pregnant woman's belly, to show how a fifty-year-old teacher in the village had been bloated before he died of liver cancer a few months earlier.

Miscarriage and infertility are rife, which in a village culture that values
the victims and
communities. They are afraid more than anything that it will create "matrimonial problems," as Kumar puts it, a curse whose social impact cannot be overstated in India, where 95 percent of marriages are still arranged. A woman even thought to be infertile is unmarriageable. Even though dowry is proscribed by law, any health problem in a woman will make her family unable to afford a groom's demands. Depression and suicide have also been epidemic. Kumar had tracked at least nine suicides in the village in the past several years and suspects that clinical depression is another unstudied side effect of chronic exposure to endosulfan. I ask him what the most common means of committing suicide is in his experience. "Hanging, most often. After that, drinking the pesticide itself. It's cheap and widely available."

The villagers, he says, are more terrified of the stigma of disease than of the disease itself, deeply wary of outsiders, suspicious of anyone from the government. "They have stopped the spraying, at least temporarily, but even today they will not admit that the endosulfan caused this. They say it is from eating areca. Can you imagine? Children and pregnant women eating areca nut? They say that endosulfan is safe under laboratory conditions. But it is not used in labs; it is used in fields."

Tests of long-term endosulfan exposure on rats have shown a wide array of reproductive aftereffects, from reproductive damage and abnormal bone development to mutagenicity (a permanent change in genetic structure that can cause cancer and developmental disorders in subsequent generations). Mortality rates were so high in testing to determine whether it was a carcinogen that they proved inconclusive. That is, endosulfan is so toxic that it killed the rats outright before it could give them cancer. The EPA's re-registration documents, while approving the continued use of the pesticide in the United States, recommended a host of studies to determine the long-term effects of endosulfan exposure and outlined the degree to which many these effects remain unknown.

The EPA's position highlights o of the fundamental flaws in the lab ratory testing process that leads to th registration of toxic chemicals. T exposure studies done on rats we conducted over two years. The exp sure at Vaninagar was over a perio of decades, with unmeasurable dosag administered to unquantified people. is a Sisyphean task even to gather cen sus data, let alone meaningful healt statistics in rural India. And the con ditions under which a chemical deemed safe in the lab often don't ap ply in the field. Interaction with oth er chemicals is not measured. Unde laboratory conditions, a molecule endosulfan has a half-life in water one week. But in the earth, bound t soil particles, or held anaerobically i the rot of leaf litter in a streambe unable to oxidize, it can last for year

The government owns the cashe plantation and Hindustan Insecti cides Limited, and controls all regu latory bodies for both industries. Th PCK and HIL were both criticized i a 2002 Greenpeace report, but as fa as Kumar can see, whether due t outright corruption or bureaucrati ineptitude, they will never admi that endosulfan has caused all thes diseases. And they will never com pensate the victims.

"Not that anything could reall help," he adds. "For most, the damag is done."

He hands over a packet of pho tographs. Snapshot after snapshot children with congenital abnormali ties: a hand with fingers the size pencil erasers, a young girl with a le drawn up and twisted like a chicken' wing, a retarded boy propped agains his mother, a boy with leukemia lyin prostrate and withered on a bed. Th worst is of a hydrocephalic infant girl wailing, her hands clenched into fists The head is enormous, larger than th rest of the body, inflated like a bal loon about to burst. Flies crawl in th squeezed-shut corners of her eyes. "She lived for six weeks," says Ku mar, shaking his head.

India is a country where the ab sence of a social safety net is so tota that for millions of the chronically

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, one chapati, one chocolate. No
mmi, no pappi." He has a black
e surrounded by pink scar tissue
ere his left ear was. A child muti-
d in this way by his own parents
ctions as a retirement plan. All have laid before them a scattering of 5-paise coins, a thousand to the dollar, tossed as zakat by the Muslims returning from evening prayers.

Outside Kumar's office a group of schoolboys have abandoned their cricket match to examine the curiosity of my presence. They stand in a clutch, dust covered, staring, and, as is customary in India, send forth an emissary who is to report back to the group. The boys all wear *lunghis* and collared shirts, a strange combination of Indian peasant and British public-school lad. Vinod talks to one, and he turns and reports back. Peppered in a slew of Kannada, I hear again, endosulfan, endosulfan. The boys repeat to one another, endosulfan, endosulfan. It is a visitation by the outside world, which has never taken any interest in Vaninagar until the great misfortune of its slow poisoning. Endosulfan is the name of a new deity, which, whether or not it is guilty of visiting a plague upon this village, has become for them the incarnation of the modern age, and of the unfathomable mysteries of chemistry and economics that have forever altered rural life in India. And I, as an outsider, am its avatar.

We walk down the hill, led by the group of boys. The village is quiet in the late afternoon, dusty men heading home from the brick quarry, women carrying water up from the valley bottom in metal cans. Everyone stares as I walk past, trailing a swarm of ragged boys. Along the steep path, I stop to look at a cashew apple dangling over the trail. The fruit is yellow, swollen, and the nut hangs beneath it like a strange organ, or an eight-week-old fetus. I reach out and heft it, prompting one of the boys to push my hand away. It is swarming with a beneficial species of ant that according to Padre had been wiped out during the spraying. It occurs to me that India hangs just as tenuously from the vast bough of Asia, like a fruit to which a sixth of humanity clings.

Down a steep ravine, we arrive at a smooth, dry cow-dung patio where areca and pepper are spread out to dry. An


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ancient woman crouches on the ground, a sickle clenched beneath her splayed toes. She [illegible] dried areca leaf across the blade, slicing them up for fodder, and does not look up once. Thanoji Appe steps out from the low, thatch-roofed house to meet us. He wears a [illegible] checked shirt, smiles warmly with missing teeth. The woman, his grandmother, is ninety-eight years old. She was born here, on this same land, a few years after the death of Queen Victoria. As I talk to Appe, she continues her work, and the pile of areca strips grows beside her. Pepper, areca, and cashew dry on the smooth cow-dung-and-clay courtyard.

Behind him, through the wooden slats of the front porch, a little girl, almond-shaped eyes bright and curious, stares out at me. Her name is Sruthi, and he calls to her, tells her to come outside and say hello. She steps out shyly from the shaded porch into the afternoon sun, revealing a prosthetic leg below her school uniform, and musters all her grace to come down the steps to the courtyard. The knee is a steel hinge, the calf plastic, and the foot a brown rubber, scuffed from barefoot walking around the red-dirt paths of the village. Around the rubber ankle is a silver bangle to match the one on her other foot, and, smiling, she sits down next to us, folding her metal knee with a child's studied elegance. Her hands are like the antlers of a deer, bifurcated above the wrist into two branches, each branch with two fingers. They are shaped as popular imagination draws the hands of aliens, mutated yet somehow intelligent, capable. She sits singing quietly to herself as I talk to her father through Vinod. They speak Kannada, though Vinod is a Malayalam speaker and Appe's native language is Tulu, a regional dialect that has no written expression.

Through layers of language, Appe relates the sorrows his family has endured. He remembers the spraying, the helicopter passing right over the house, and the choking, headaches, and itching that followed for days after. They didn't know what the spray was. The Malayalam word for pesticide, *marunnu*, means medicine. That was all the explanation they were offered. It was medicine for the cashew trees. When [illegible] victim's. The doctor had shown me a [illegible] news clipping. Her father, before [illegible] The 80,000-rupee operation (an amount few families make in two years) had been financed by donations from the community and a group of German documentarians who had visited the village the previous year. Now she could walk alone, was an ace student, loved school. When she was young, there was no question of an operation: her mother had stomach cancer, and her radiation treatments in Mangalore used up all the family's resources. It wasn't until she died four years ago that treatment for the girl could be considered.

Appe works as a day laborer in the plantations and farms around the village. The going rate for an eight-hour day harvesting areca or pepper, with lunch included, is about 60 rupees. It is lucky to be paid that much for a day's work, he says. They live with his new wife and their baby, who crawls around naked in the dirt, laughing, with a silver chain around his waist. The sun sinks, a dusty orange light suffuses the forest. Sruthi's stepmother carries a pail to the cow stall, and the light of a hurricane lamp casts through the slats and falls across the courtyard. It is so still I can hear jets of milk echo in the hollow of the pail like a pulse of blood into the chamber of a heart.

Thanoji Appe has a sorrow in his eyes, red from work. He does not want to be sad, he whispers, that she is a girl-child, that she won't be able to be married off. When her mother was sick they prayed to Jatadhari, offered money at the temple. Sruthi swings her leg, sings. She'll need a new leg when she grows, her father says. I ask her a few questions. She loves Kannada, loves playing *jibly*, a local variant of hopscotch. Loves peacocks and elephants. She wasn't afraid when she went to get her leg cut off. "She was asking when it would be for months," her father says. I want to ask about her mother: if she remembers her, if she was big enough to put a stick of sandalwood in her pyre. If she is angry that she was born like this, that she was dealt such a blow from the start. But she is happy, smiles brightly, I won't ask anything to shake her of it. What's the use? Vinod ar walk back up in the dark under t heady scent of the overhanging m goes, through the lam village to the waiting c

Vammagar is not the only affec area. Kumar and Padre estimate th perhaps a thousand people who l near the vast and fragmented plan tion have been exposed to endosulf A few days later, we visit another s of the plantation, where several fa lies of Adivasis live. These are the or inal inhabitants of south India, tri forest dwellers who have been syste atically relieved of their lands over t last two centuries. They are *ati sud* below the untouchable castes, at t bottom of the ladder by every standa As we pull up, a group of small, tensely dark boys are playing crick with a hand-carved bat and a cocon The wicket is a tipped-over wheelb row. Seeing us, they drop their ga and run off toward a low, mud-bri house. The area is flat and complet surrounded by the cashew trees of t Plantation Corporation of Kerala. boy puts on his shirt and runs from t water pump, where a trickle peters o into a dark spot on the ground. W walk to their hut, built of bricks qua ried on the site, which makes it appe like a natural extension of the red eart thatched with palm fronds. A brig green banana plant splits the red so A group of men stand around with sic les tucked into their *lunghis*, arm crossed, skin almost black from the su On the shaded porch, a woman hol a baby wrapped up in a cloth. Vino talks to her, talks to the men. Th had thought I was a doctor. They a Mavilans, worshipers of Karinjamun the black fertility goddess. Their pre ence predates the arrival of Hinduis here by millennia. The children hav never seen a white person before.

The mother's name is Sharada, an the fat little baby is named Anju. H eyes are wide and black, emphasized b the lining of dark kohl her mother h drawn under them. Sharada mov aside the cloth covering the baby lower half and reveals her secret. Dar gling between Anju's legs, like a ho rible ripe fruit, is the baby's bladde

Sl was born with it on the outside. A se es of eight operations, none of w ch the family can afford or the gov- er nent is willing to pay for, are nec- es y if the child is to survive. They re- m nber the bad air from the h copters, have been told that the c se might be the "medicine" that tl PCK sprayed on the cashews. But tl PCK had sent men to tell them tl their baby's disease, and the men- t y retarded infant in the house next d r, were not caused by endosulfan. T e swollen sun drops through the c new trees. Some have faintly aro- n ic blossoms just beginning to wilt, s ne have fruit already swelling, s ngely lobed, almost sexual in col- c nd shape. They are sorry they have r chairs for us. I say it is no trouble. The guest is a god, they tell Vinod.

Mr. Pradeep Dave, president of Pesticides Manufacturers & For- t lators Association of India, shares I Dubey's views on pesticides. He c ers a number of novel theories. I st, that the diseases in Kasargod a in fact caused by radioactive min- d ls that are naturally in the soil t re, and from uranium and thorium m ning that has gone on nearby. Sec- d, that this radiation poisoning is c mpounded by intermarriage. ird, that the NGOs that are cam- igning against certain pesticides e in fact being sponsored by rival sticide manufacturers to surrepti- usly promote their product. Pesti- les are profoundly good, he insists, ing the millions saved in the Sec- d World War by DDT's eradica- n of the Anopheles mosquito, and e fact that despite five years of ought there are 60 million tons of rplus grain in India. His metaphors e strikingly similar to Dubey's, as ough they have debriefed each her: "Some farmers are using too uch pesticide. It is like eating too uch, or like a medicine that you ke too much of. Maybe the doctor ys take one tablet, and you take ore and more, and instead of mak- g you better it makes you sick." he demonization of endosulfan is st greed, Dave insists. "Fifty million ers of endosulfan are used in India very year. Why is this one village complaining? We will fight to protect our molecules. They are our babies."

In Badiadika, the nearest town of any size, we stop for lunch at a chai stall, a mountain of rice and white-hot curry served on a banana leaf. I sip chai, soaked in sweat even in the acacia shade, watching the circus of Keralite street life: near-collisions of three-wheeled auto rickshaws, bright orange trucks decorated with mirrors and Christmas lights like rolling shrines, magicians waving drug-addled cobras at their marks, elephants hauling logs, a fistfight as sudden as a cloudburst, chattering monkeys fleeing from lathi-wielding policemen. Cyclones of dust and newspaper eddy behind passing buses. Vinod disappears after lunch for half an hour, then returns, excitedly slamming a newspaper-wrapped parcel on the table.

"There is your endosulfan!" he cries, terribly pleased with himself. I unwrap the paper and look at a 100-ml bottle marked POISON in block letters. Vinod had bought it at a local farm-supply store, where the owner keeps it in the back, out of sight, because of the environmentalists and journalists. DDT was also available.

When Vinod asked if the endosulfan was dangerous, the man had said, "Don't worry, just get your workers to mix it for you."

The black market for banned pesticides in India is not measurable, but anecdotal evidence (and Vinod's foray to the farm-supply store) suggests that DDT is as easy to procure as powdered milk. "There are lots of laws in India," Vinod says, "but very little enforcement." Vast quantities are produced and supposedly severely regulated, only to be used in limited circumstances to control disease vectors. When a pneumonic-plague outbreak occurred in Gujarat in 1994, tons of DDT were shipped to control the rat flea that spread the disease. After the epidemic was brought under control, many of those stocks were sold on the black market, often repackaged as ant killer, if they were labeled at all. With endosulfan, the black market is even simpler; since it is banned only in Kerala, sellers easily can procure


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[illegible] I have no idea what to do with it.

The Plantation Corporation of Kerala's Cashew Project is a modest [illegible] in the middle of a sun-blasted, grassless expanse at the edge of the cashew groves. Mr. [illegible] the shade, boiling chai over a portable gas stove. They grumble that they have not been paid [illegible] months, despite the fact that the plantation is supposedly turning a profit. They take Vinod and me for agricultural grad students, though we do not offer this information. More chai, and Mr. Roguthaman, the plantation administrator, happily launches into a lengthy discourse in Malayalam about the minutiae of plantation economics: hectares of trees planted, profits realized, laborers employed, the commodity rate per kilo of cashew, and crop losses from the twin scourges of stem borers and tea mosquitoes, the latter of which endosulfan is meant to eradicate. It seems that despite the moratorium on spraying, the plantation has had two bumper crops in a row, though Roguthaman finds this neither remarkable nor a justification for a permanent ban.

The cashew, indigenous to northern Brazil, was brought to India in the late sixteenth century by the Portuguese, who introduced it to all their tropical colonies. The fruit was originally considered the valuable crop, and an alcoholic beverage called fenny was fermented (and still is today) from the juice of the bulbous, fibrous, astringent cashew-apple. It wasn't until the end of World War II and the rise of the cocktail-hour leisure economy that snack nuts became widely popular as a global commodity, and today cashews are second only to almonds in economic importance. The crop generates $400 million in revenue for India every year, and the PCK, which was funded by the World Bank in 1980 as a rehabilitation project, produces more than any other plantation in the country.

Roguthaman walks us out in the blinding sunlight to point out an infestation of stem borers. The cashew trees are the only green things in the landscape. Under the canopy of a large old cashew, Roguthaman peels away a slab of bark like a scab, revealing a clicking, scurrying group of enormous borers. The tree will be dead in a year. DDT and BHC, both of which are [illegible] really the only things that will [illegible] these [illegible] now they are absorbing their losses. As for endosulfan, he defends its use. The final verdict on the pesticide, in the form of Dubey's report, has not been returned, and he thinks that endosulfan is the cheapest and safest of the available chemicals. An alternative chemical suggested by the Ministry of Agriculture is Sevin, the very same pesticide that was manufactured at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal before it exploded.

But what of the people who claim to have been sickened by the spray? He shrugs. Who knows? There is no proof that it's endosulfan. His workers would stir the chemical with their hands, wiping it off with grass. They would stand in the plantation during spraying with only a handkerchief over their mouths. They sprayed 3,000 liters a year. None of his laborers has become sick. He pounds his chest to demonstrate his imperviousness to a chemical a teaspoon of which would kill an elephant. Endosulfan is fine. They have barrels of the stuff in storage. Would I like to see?

My eyes adjust slowly to the darkness of the storage shed as Roguthaman slides the door open. A pile of cashews have spilled from a burlap sack across the floor. To one side are four dust-covered barrels, each containing 200 liters of endosulfan. I smell one, and there is a faint but distinct acridity coming off the barrel, something like turpentine. There is enough poison in these containers to kill 80,000 people. But of course it is not the acute poisoning that is the problem. It is the microdose, a few molecules at a time, the chronic exposure to the communities around the plantation over twenty years, that has visited upon them the wrath of a new and vengeful god. I rap my knuckles against the lid, with its skull-and-crossbones label: a dull echo. The rusting barrels in the shed are as inert as mothballed cluster-bombs, waiting only for the inconvenient ban to be lifted.

In Vaninagar I visit another small farm, 100 yards along the hillside from Appe's house, which belong[s] Surender Shetty. In the front y[ard] under the spreading shade of a l[arge] cashew tree, is a *thulasi* plant s[et] rounded by a cage of thorns to k[eep] the goats away. He crushes the lea[f] under my nose; it gives off a sha[rp] lemony smell. *Thulasi* cures fev[er] and sore throats, and every house[hold] the village has one growing in [a] courtyard, a sacramental medic[ine] cabinet. Shetty's twelve-year-old s[on] Udayan, an epileptic with cereb[ral] palsy, sits drooling on his fad[ed] Chicago Bulls T-shirt, scabby kn[ees] bent under him awkwardly. H[e] smiles attentively, and just as quic[kly] a spasmodic shadow crosses his f[ace] and his mind wanders elsewhe[re]. Shetty brings chairs; they want fi[rst] to know what we need, if we've h[ad] anything to drink. He brings c[o]conuts, lopped open with a sick[le], and tells me the plantation's he[li]copter pilot refused to drink cocon[uts] from Vaninagar and insisted [on] bringing his own.

Shetty's wife rolls *bidis*. She s[its] cross-legged holding in her lap [a] bamboo tray with a neat stack of *te[n]du* leaves, a pile of shredded tobac[co] and thread and scissors. She cuts t[he] leaves, rolls the tobacco, and ti[es] them off with string. It is an unco[n]scious process, a slavery measur[e] out in heartbeats, but she can ta[lk] and look after her son. Workin[g] nonstop for a day, a good roller c[an] make over 1,000, for which she w[ill] be paid 46 rupees. This is an ec[o]nomics to which millions of wom[en] in India are subjected. She says [it] would be nice if we could speak t[he] same language, says she is blessed [to] have visitors. Taking care of Uda[y]an, who frequently collapses [in] seizures, she can make only three [or] four hundred *bidis* a day. They b[uy] Western medicines for his epilep[sy] from the doctor, though they use tr[a]ditional cures for most things. She [is] the same woman who came into K[u]mar's office to buy epilepsy medici[ne] with a dog-eared 10-rupee note. H[er] daughter, with the same aquiline fe[a]tures, same sorrowful eyes, colla[r] bones as prominent as tree branch[es] over which a sari has been hung [to] dry, stands beside her. I ask th[e] mother if she is angry at what h[as]

›pened to her son and her village. 'hat can I say? It is my fate."

Shetty works whitewashing houses, 'en there is work. He smells like ›onshine, the country liquor also ›own as "sky juice" because of the ›tom of hanging it in jugs from the m tops. He tells Vinod he is a com- itive player of Kabbadi, a local game e capture-the-flag that involves say- ; "kabbadikabbadikabbadikabbadi" er and over when you cross into en- ıy territory. Twice he has made a 0-kilometer pilgrimage to a temple shave his head as an offering to the ›yyam Manjunatha, praying for his y to be healed. He has prayed and ıde offerings to Jatadhari as well. ıere are more than 400 deities with- the two northern districts of Kerala, d perhaps 3 million fill the vast Hin- ı pantheon across the subcontinent. ›ople offer rupees, liquor, coconuts, ıickens. In old times they sacrificed ephants, even humans. These trib- es were meant to ward off evil, cure seases, secure blessings. Anything to influence the arbitrary wrath of the divine.

The British called these rituals black agic, but really it was the organic ›olution of belief. The gods that ruled ıis place were natural extensions of ıe landscape, grew here along with ıe people, and followed the rhythms f plantings and monsoons, birth and eath. Religion dropped roots like a anyan. The plantation economy and ıdustrialized agriculture disrupted the ulse of life here: the monsoon grew apricious, and the jungles fell to the xe and the bulldozer. The cultivation f cash monocrops disrupted human fe as completely as it upset the trop- ıal ecology that had achieved a bal- nce, despite Kerala's huge population ensity, over the course of centuries. 'he insatiable logic of a tropical em- ›ire created a new cycle to replace the ndigenous one: deforestation in the ıighlands caused flooding in the plains, lisplacing a population that in turn ›nocked hungrily at the plantation ıates, or fled to the huge slums that ıow grow around every city in south Asia. The web of beneficial insects hat held ecological disaster in check was unraveled by vast plantings of cof- ee, tea, banana, and cashew. The sor- cerers' apprentices concocted a host of chemicals to restore order. Consequences have been meted out over lifetimes, generations. The water was poisoned. No government committee can measure the result.

Shetty shows me his water source, a black-mouthed tunnel, called a *thuranga,* dug into the hillside. The cashew trees of the plantation are on the hill above. It is the height and shape of a man, a giant birth canal into the living earth. Stepping over the trickle of water that comes out of its mouth and collects in a pool, I walk far back into it, out of the bright tropical light and heat. A few paces and I am in almost total darkness, the entrance behind me, ringed with foliage, a window on the outer world. In the *thuranga* it is cool, the walls are covered with moss and tiny ferns, there is the sound of dripping water, and a little stream of clear water runs along the sandy floor of the cave's base. It goes 40 meters deep into the hillside, beyond the reach of light. Vinod says to be careful, some of these fork off and you'll get lost in the dark. The flashlight they've given me, dim as a lightning bug, is useless in the blackness. The *thuranga* seems haunted by restive ghosts. I imagine the endosulfan molecules, bound to soil particles, percolating down through the loamy earth, infusing the trickle of water that Shetty comes to fetch for his family, that they share with the neighbors. Incremental, tiny doses, an experiment more complicated than any ever devised in a laboratory, and more comprehensive: *x* factors of rain, variables of oxygen. No one to record the results, draw conclusions.

I can feel the weight of all the earth above me, the cashew roots curling like warped fingers through the soil, and the cool cave walls seem to gather closer, the moss to reach out tendrils, the ferns at the distant cave-mouth to stiffen like a dog's hackles. I turn and scramble out, a diver going up for air, clouding the stream in my panic.

Outside the *thuranga*'s mouth we squat on our haunches, Indian-style, Shetty and Vinod and I and some local boys, as the sun drops in the red western sky over the ghats. We sit smoking *bidis,* making small talk. I don't know what to say. It is a slow disaster in a land full of disasters, where fact and myth obscure each other, where the old gods have been rendered obsolete, where millions suffer worse than this, where the chains of fate and blame are bound irrevocably around each new life.

I ask Shetty what he thinks of all these strangers coming to Vaninagar. "What can I say? These doctors come, these foreigners come, they look at Udayan like a specimen. Politicians come and say they'll consider, scientists come and draw blood, journalists come and take pictures, I parade my boy in front of them all. Nothing changes." There is quiet between us, wound through the burning-leaf smell of the *bidis* his wife has rolled and the sound of dripping water.

Vinod and I walk down a dirt path through the village to the Kodenkiri, watched by eyes from every doorway, followed by curious children. The stream runs sluggishly down from the plantation in the April heat before the arrival of the June monsoon. I watch out for cobras in the leaf litter. Upstream, women with their saris hitched up slap laundry rhythmically against the rocks, throwing off sprays of mist as they spin it in the air. Some of the stones are worn smooth from centuries of washing. A tribal boy, Ravi, red as the earth from a dollar-a-ton day in the brick quarry, washes himself, the water running out behind him like blood. He has lived here all his life. He does not know the name of the stream in which we both stand knee-deep but raises his hand above his head to show the monsoon height of the waters. He stoops and cups water to his mouth. It is the stream, he laughs, why should he know its name?

A *thumbi,* an iridescent red-eyed dragonfly, lands on a branch, wings dappled from sunlight reflecting on the water. Tiny minnows have returned, at least for now. Wild mangoes, the remnants of the vanished monsoon jungle spared for their utility, hang gnarled and enormous over the creek. Floating leaves cast amoebic shapes on the creek till, a shadow-play of mitosis. There is something primal in these expressions, an affirmation: let alone, lived with, the water will clear, the land will return. ■

# IT'S AS EASY AS

one, two, three

uno, dos, tres

un, deux, trois

一, 二, 三

eins, zwei, drei

אחת, שתיים, שלוש

jeden, dwa, trzy

एक, दो, तीन

moja, mbili, tatu

일, 이, 삼

een, twee, drie

один, два, три

uno, due, tre

unus, duo, tres

یو، دوه، درې

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# SAULT STE. MARIE

*By David Means*

Ernie dug in with the tip of his enknife, scratching a line into the lastic top of the display case, following the miniature lock system as it tepped down between Lake Superior nd Lake Huron. At the vindow, Marsha ignored s both and stood blowng clouds of smoke at he vista . . . a superanker rising slowly in he lock, hefted by water . . as if it mattered that he system was fully unctioning and freight vas moving up and lown the great seaway. As if it mattered that ore vas being transported rom the hinterlands of Duluth (a nullifyingly oring place) to the eastern seaboard and points eyond. As if it mattered hat the visitor's center stood bathed in sunlight, while behind he gift counter an old lady sat reading a paperback and doing her best to ignore the dry scratch of Ernie's knife, raising her rheumy eyes on occasion, reaching up to adjust her magnificent hair with the flat of her hand. —I'm gonna go see that guy I know, Tull, about the boat I was telling you about, Ernie announced, handing me the knife. He tossed his long black hair to the side, reached into his pants, yanked out his ridiculously long-barreled .44 Remington Magnum, pointed it at the lady, and said, —But first I'm going to rob this old bag. —Stick 'em up, he said, moving toward the lady, who stared over the top of her paperback. Her face was ancient; the skin drooped from her jaw, and on her chin bits of hair collected faintly into something that looked like a Vandyke. A barmaid beauty remained in her face, along with a stony resilience. Her saving feature was a great big poof of silvery hair that rose like a nest and stood secured by an arrangement of bobby pins and a very fine hairnet. —Take whatever you want, she said in a husky voice, lifting her hands out in a gesture of offering. —As a matter of fact, shoot me if you feel inclined. It's not going to matter to me. I'm pushing eighty. I've lived the life I'm going to live and I've seen plenty of things and had my heart broken and I've got rheumatoid arthritis in these knuckles so bad I can hardly hold a pencil to paper. (She lifted her hand and turned it over so we could see the claw formation of her fingers.) —And putting numbers into the cash register is painful. —Jesus Christ, Ernie said, shooting you would just be doing the world a favor, and too much fun, and he tucked the gun back in his pants, adjusted the hem of his shirt, and went to find this guy with the boat. Marsha maintained her place at the window, lit another cigarette, and stared at the boat while I took Ernie's knife from the top of the display case and began scratching where he left off. Finished with the matter, the old lady behind the gift counter raised the paperback up to her face and began reading. Outside, the superfreighter rose with leisure; it was one of those long ore boats, a football field in length, with guys on bicycles making the journey from bow to stern. There was probably great beauty in



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"Untitled, 1999," from the series "Untitled [ ]," by Alexandra Rowley. Courtesy Chimps Art, New York City

its immensity. At the way it emerged from the lower parts of the seaway, lifted by the water. But I didn't see it. At that time in my life, it was just one more industrial relic in my face.

A few minutes later, when Ernie shot the guy named Tull in the parking lot, the gun produced a tight little report that bounced off the side of the freighter that was sitting up in the lock, waiting for the go-ahead. The weight line along the ship's hull was far above the visitor's station; below the white stripe, the skin of the hull was shoddy with flakes of rust and barnacle scars. The ship looked ashamed of itself exposed for the whole world to see, like a lady with her skirt blown up. The name on the bow, in bright white letters, was HENRY JACKMAN. Looking down at us, a crew member raised his hand against the glare. What he saw was a sad scene: a ring of blue gun smoke lingering around the guy Ernie shot, who was muttering the word fuck and bowing down while blood pooled around his crotch. By the time we scrambled to the truck and got out of there, he was trembling softly on the pavement, as if he were trying to limbo-dance under an impossibly low bar. I can assure you now, the guy didn't die that morning. A year later we came face-to-face at an amusement park near Bay City, and he looked perfectly fine, strapped into a contraption that would—a few seconds after our eyes met—roll him into a triple corkscrew at eighty miles an hour. I like to imagine that the roller-coaster ride shook his vision of me into an aberration that stuck in his mind for the rest of his earthly life.

For what it's worth, the back streets of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, were made of concrete with nubs of stone mixed in, crisscrossed with crevices, passing grand old homes fallen into disrepair—homes breathing the smell of mildew and dry rot from their broken windows. Ernie drove with his hand up at the noon position while the police sirens wove through the afternoon heat behind us. The sound was frail, distant, and meaningless. We'd heard

[illegible] the past three weeks [illegible] town, always respectfully distant, unconcerned [illegible] in a breeze until it disappeared. Ernie had a knack [illegible] circumstances. We stuck up a convenience store, taking off with fifty bucks and five green-and-white cartons of menthol cigarettes. Then a few days later we hog-tied a liquor-store clerk and made off with a box of Cutty Sark and five rolls of Michigan Scratch-Off Lotto tickets. Under Ernie's leadership, we tied up our victims with bravado, in front of the fish-eyed video monitors, our heads in balaclavas. We put up the V sign and shouted: Liberation for all! For good measure, we turned to the camera and yelled: Patty Hearst lives! The next morning the *Detroit Free Press* Sunday edition carried a photo, dramatically smudgy, of the three us bent and rounded off by the lens, with our guns in the air. The accompanying article speculated on our significance. According to the article, we were a highly disciplined group with strong connections to California, our gusto and verve reflecting a nationwide resurgence of Weathermen-type radicals. —A place to launch the boat will provide itself, Ernie said, sealing his lips around his dangling cigarette and pulling in smoke. Marsha rooted in the glove box and found a flaying knife, serrated and brutal-looking, with a smear of dried blood on the oak handle. She handed it to me, dug around some more, and found a baggie with pills, little blue numbers; a couple of bright reds, all mystery and portent. She spun it around a few times and then gave out a long yodel that left our ears tingling. Marsha was a champion yodeler. Of course we popped the pills and swallowed them dry while Ernie raged through the center of town, running two red lights, yanking the boat behind us like an afterthought. Marsha had her feet on the dash, and her hair tangled beautifully around her eyes and against her lips. It was the best feeling in the world to be running from the law with a boat in tow, fishtailing around corners, tossing our back wheels into the remnants of the turn, rattling wildly over the potholes, roaring through a shithole town that was desperately trying to stay afloat in the mod-

ern world and finding itself sinkin[g] deeper into squalor beneath a sky th[at] unfurled blue and deep. All this alon[g] with drugs that were, thank Chris[t] swiftly going about their perplexi[ng] work, turning the whole show inside out and making us acutely aware of th[e] fact that above all we were nothin[g] much more than a collection of ra[w] sensations. Marsha's legs emergin[g] beautiful from her fringed cuto[ff] shorts—the shorts are another story—[a] and her bare toes, with her nails pain[t]ed cherry red, wiggling in the breez[e] from the window. The seaway at th[e] bottom of the street, spread out in fro[nt] of a few lonely houses, driftwood gray[,] rickety and grand, baking in the sum[-] mer heat. They crackled with dryness. They looked ready to explode into flames. They looked bereft of all hope. In front of a Victorian, a single dog held taut by a long length of rope barked and tried to break free, turning and twisting and looping the full circumference of his plight. We parked across the street, got out of the truck and looked at him while he, in turn, looked back. He was barking SOS. Over and over again. Bark bark bark. Bark bark bark. Bark bark bark. Bark bark bark. Until finally Ernie yanked his gun from his belt, pointed quickly, with both hands extended out for stability, and released a shot that materialized as a burst of blooming dust near the dog; then another shot that went over his head and splintered a porch rail. The dog stopped barking and the startled air glimmered, got brighter, shiny around the edges, and then fell back into the kind of dull haze you find only in small towns in summer, with no one around but a dog who has finally lost the desire to bark. The dog sat staring at us. He was perfectly fine but stone-still. Out in the water a container ship stood with solemnity, as if dumbfounded by its own passage, covered in bright green tarps. —We're gonna drop her right here, Ernie said, unleashing the boat, throwing back restraining straps, trying to look like he knew what he was doing. The water was a five-foot fall from the corrugated steel and poured cement buttress of the wall. The Army Corps of Engineers had constructed a breakwall of ridiculous proportions. We lifted the hitch, removed it from the

, and wiggled the trailer over so
the bow of the boat hung over
edge. Then without consultation—
king off the mutual energies of our
ns—we lifted the trailer and spilled
boat over the edge. It landed in
water with a plop, worked hard to
it itself, coming to terms with its
y place in the world, settling back
Ernie manipulated the rope and
ed it along to some ladder rungs.
claim this was anything but a love
y would be to put Sault Ste. Marie
poor light. The depleted look in
sky and the sensation of the pills
king in our bloodstream, enliven-
the water, the slap and pop of the
tal hull over the waves. The super-
ghter (the one with green tarps)
ming at our approach. To go into
se details too much would be to
ass the essential fact of the mat-
I was deeply in love with Marsha.
thing else in the universe mattered.
ould have killed for her, I would
ve swallowed the earth like an
-eating snake. I would have turned
ide out in my own skin. I was cer-
a that I might have stepped from
boat and walked on the water,
king little shuffling movements,
serving my energy, doing what Je-
did but only better. Jesus walked on
ter to prove a point. I would have
ne it for the hell of it. Just for fun.
prove my love. Up at the bow Ernie
od with his heel on the gunwale,
e elbow resting on a knee, looking
e the figurehead on a Viking ship. I
in the back with Marsha, watching
she held the rubber grip and guided
e motor with her suspiciously well-
omed fingers. I could see in the jit-
riness of her fingers that she was
out to swing the boat violently to the
le. Maybe not as some deeply mean-
irited act but just as a joke on Ernie,
o was staring straight ahead, mak-
g little hoots, patting his gun, and
ying, —We're coming to get you.
'e're gonna highjack us a mother-
cking superfreighter, boys. I put my
nd over Marsha's and held it there.
er legs, caught in the fringed grip of
r tight cutoff jeans, were gleaming
th spray. (She'd amputated the pants
ck in a hotel in Manistee, laying
em over her naked thighs while we
atched, tweaking the loose threads
t to make them just right.) Tiny
beads of water clung to the downy hairs along the top of her thighs, fringed with her cutoff jeans, nipping and tucking up into her crotch. Who knows? Maybe she was looking at my legs, too, stretched against her own, the white half-moon of my knees poking through the holes in my jeans. When I put my hand over hers I felt our forces conjoin into a desire to toss Ernie overboard.

Two nights later we were alone in an old motel, far up in the nether regions of the Upper Peninsula, near the town of Houghton, where her friend Charlene had OD'ed a few years back. Same hotel, exactly. Same room, too. She'd persuaded me that she had to go and hold a wake for her dead friend. (—I gotta go to the same hotel, she said. —The same room.) The hotel was frequented mainly by sailors, merchant-marine types, a defiled place with soggy rank carpet padding and dirty towels. In bed we finished off a few of Tull's pills. Marsha was naked, resting on her side as she talked to me in a solemn voice about Charlene and how much they had meant to each other one summer, and how, when her own father was on a rage, they would go hide out near the airport, along the fence out there, hanging out and watching the occasional plane arrive, spinning its propellers wildly and making tipping wing gestures as if in a struggle to conjure the elements of flight. Smoking joints and talking softly, they poured out secrets the way only stoner girls can—topping each other's admissions, one after the other, matter-of-factly saying yeah, I did this guy who lived in Detroit and was a dealer and he, like, he like was married and we took his car out to the beach and spent two days doing it. Listening to her talk, it was easy to imagine the two of them sitting out there in the hackweed and elderberry on cooler summer nights, watching the silent airstrips, cracked and neglected, waiting for the flight from Chicago. I'd spent my own time out in that spot. It was where Marsha and I figured out that we were bound by coincidence: our fathers had both worked to their deaths in the paint booth at Fisher Body, making sure the enamel was spread


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evenly, suffering from the gaps in their masks, from inhaled solvents, and from producing quality automobiles.

I was naked on the ice [illegible] Marsha, slightly buzzed, but not stoned out of my sense of awareness. I ran my hand along her hip and down into the concave smoothness of her waist while she, in return, [illegible] and pawed and cupped my ass, pulling me forward against her as she cried softly [illegible] breath, about nothing in particular except that we were all in to have sex. I was going to roll her over softly, expose her ass, find myself against her, and then press my lips to her shoulder blades as I sank in. When I got to that point, I became aware of the ashen cinder-block smell of the hotel room, the rubber of the damp carpet padding, the walls smeared with mildew, and the large russet stains that marked the dripping zone inside the tub and along the upper rim of the toilet. Outside, the hotel—peeling pink stucco, with a pale blue slide curling into an empty pool—stood along an old road, a logging route, still littered with the relics of a long-past tourist boom. The woods across from the place were thick with undergrowth, and the gaps between trees seemed filled with the dark matter of interstellar space. When we checked in it was just past sunset, but the light was already drawn away by the forest. It went on for miles and miles. Just looking at it too long would be to get lost, to wander in circles. You could feel the fact that we were far up along the top edge of the United States; the north pole began its pull around there, and the aurora borealis spread across the sky. I like to think that we both came out of our skin, together, in one of those orgasmic unifications. I like to think that two extremely lonely souls—both fearing that they had just killed another human being—united themselves carnally for some wider, greater sense of the universe; I like to think that maybe for one moment in my life, I reached up and ran my hand through God's hair. But who knows? Who really knows? The truth remains lodged back in that moment, and that moment is gone, and all I can honestly at-

[illegible] feel a deep [illegible] for our lust—made [illegible] me at the very moment we were both engaged in fornication. (That's the word Ernie used: I'd like to fornicate with that one over there, or I'm going to find me some fornication.) We lay on the bed and let the breeze come through the hotel window—cool and full of yellow pine dust—across our damp bellies. The air of northern Michigan never quite matches the freshness of Canada. There's usually a dull iron-ore residue in it, or the smell of dead flies accumulating between the stones on shore. Staring up at the ceiling, Marsha felt compelled to talk about her dead friend. She lit a smoke and took a deep inhalation and let it sift from between her teeth. (I was endlessly attracted to the big unfixed gap-tooth space between her two front ones.) Here's the story she told me in as much detail as I can muster:

Charlene was a hard-core drifter, born in Sarnia, Ontario, across the lake from Port Huron. Her grandmother on her mother's side raised her, except for a few summers—the ones in our town—with her deranged autoworker father. She was passed on to her grandfather on her father's side for some reason, up in Nova Scotia. Her grandfather was an edgy, hard drinker who abused her viciously. Along her ass were little four-leaf-clover scar formations. She ran away from her grandfather, back to her grandmother in Sarnia, and then ran away from her and crossed the International Bridge to Detroit, where she hooked up with a guy named Stan, a maintenance worker at a nursing home, who fixed air conditioners and cleared dementia-plugged toilets. Stan was into cooking crank in his spare time. They set up a lab in a house near Dearborn, in a pretty nice neighborhood, actually. Then one day there was an explosion and Stan got a face full of battery acid. She left him behind and hooked up with another cooker, named King, who had a large operation in a house near Saginaw. She worked with him and helped out, but she never touched the stuff and was angelic and pious about it. Even King saw a kind of beauty in Charlene's abstinence, Marsha said. For all the abuse she had suffered [illegible] had a spiritual kind of calm. Her e[illegible] were, like, this amazingly deep l[illegible] color. Aside from her scars and all, [illegible] still had the whitest, purest skin, Sn[illegible] White skin, the kind that you just w[illegible] to touch, like a cool smooth sto[illegible] She just got more and more beauti[illegible] until eventually the guy named K[illegible] couldn't stand the gentleness in [illegible] eyes and, maybe to try to change thi[illegible] around, he started to beat her face [illegible] a punching bag. One afternoon, un[illegible] the influence of his own product, [illegible] had a couple of friends hold her do[illegible] while he struck her face with a m[illegible] pounder, just hammered it, until [illegible] was close to death—maybe actua[illegible] dead. Maybe she left her body a[illegible] floated above herself and looked do[illegible] and saw a guy with long shaggy h[illegible] and a silver meat hammer bashing h[illegible] face in and decided it just wasn't wor[illegible] dying in that kind of situation and [illegible] went back into her body. (Marsha w[illegible] pretty firm in her belief about th[illegible] part.) Charlene's cheekbones were br[illegible] ken, her teeth shattered. It took abo[illegible] twenty operations on her jaw and tee[illegible] just to chew again. Even then, che[illegible] ing never felt right; her fake tee[illegible] slipped from the roof of her mout[illegible] she talked funny, and a ringing soun[illegible] ed in her ears when she tried to smil[illegible] When she laughed too hard, h[illegible] mouth would clamp up and she'd he[illegible] a chiming sound, high in pitch, lik[illegible] bells, and then the sound of windswe[illegible] rain, or wind in a shell, or win[illegible] through guy wires, or a dry, dust[illegible] windswept street, or the rustling of ti[illegible] sue paper, or a sizzling like a sing[illegible] slice of bacon in a pan, or a dial tor[illegible] endlessly unwinding in her eardrun[illegible] Forever she was up over herself look[illegible] ing down, watching King go at he[illegible] the two guys holding onto her shou[illegible] ders, her legs scissor-kicking, the flas[illegible] of the hammer until it was impossibl[illegible] to know what was going on beneat[illegible] the blood. When Marsha met he[illegible] again—a year or so later, in the brea[illegible] room at Wal-Mart, she had this weir[illegible] ly deranged face; the out-of-place fea[illegible] tures demanded some thought to pu[illegible] straight. I mean it was a mess, Marsh[illegible] said. Her nose was folded over. Th[illegible] Detroit team of plastic and oral sur[illegible] geons just couldn't put poor Charlen[illegible] back together again. A total Humpt[illegible]

mpty. No one was going to spend ge amounts of money on a face of a fter, anyway. Marsha forced herself look. Then Charlene told her the ry of King, the reasons for the dam-, and the whole time Marsha did- remove her eyes from the nose, the rped cheeks, the fishlike mouth. She ed as hard as she could to see where e beauty had gone and what Char- ae must've been like before King ished her face, the angelic part, be- use she kind of doubted her on that rt of the story. As far as she could re- ember, from their nights together tting stoned outside the airport ace, Charlene had been, well, just a rmal-looking kid. But listening to r talk, she put the pieces together d saw that, yeah, yeah, yeah, maybe is mishmash of features had once en beautiful. Her eyes were certain- bright blue, and wide, and she had le milky skin. That night after work ey decided to go out together, not to bar where she'd get hassled but just buy some beer and go to Charlene's partment and drink. She had some tle pills she called goners, good God oners, something like that. So they ent to her apartment, took the pills, ank some beer, and decided to watch *lue Velvet*. Whatever transpired next, cording to Marsha, was amazing and credibly sensual; they were stoned gether, watching the movie, and sud- enly between them there grew a huge- powerful sense of closeness; when Marsha looked down at her on the ouch, Charlene appeared to her too orgeous not to kiss (that's how she ut it, exactly). Her mouth was funny ecause her teeth were out, so it was ist softness and nothing else, and then, omehow, they undressed—I mean it asn't like a first for either of us, Mar- ha said—and she fell down between Charlene's knees, and made her come, nd then they spent the night togeth- r. A few days later, Charlene quit her ob and split for Canada, back over he bridge, and then the next thing Marsha heard she was up north at this hotel with some guys and then she OD'ed.

The story—and the way she told it o me, early in the morning, just be- ore dawn—as both of us slid down rom our highs, our bodies tingling and half asleep, turned me on in a grotesque way. To get a hard-on based on a story of abuse seemed wrong, but it happened, and we made love to each other again, for the second time, and we both came wildly and lay there for a while until she made her confession. —I made that up, completely. I never knew a drifter named Charlene from Canada, and I certainly wouldn't sleep with a fuckface reject like that. No way. I just felt like telling a story. I felt like making one up for you. I thought it would be interesting and maybe shed some light on the world. The idea—the angelic girl, the perfect girl, the one with perfect beauty getting all mashed up like that. That's something I think about a lot. She sat up, smoking a cigarette, stretching her legs out. Dawn was breaking outside. I imagined the light plunging through the trees, and the log trucks roaring past. For a minute I felt like knocking her on the head. I imagined pinning her down and giving her face a go with a meat hammer. But I found it easy to forgive her because the story she made up had sparked wild and fanciful sex. I kissed her and looked into her eyes and noticed that they were sad and didn't move away from mine (but that's not what I noticed). What did I notice? I can't put words to it except to say she had an elegiac sadness there, and an unearned calm, and that something had been stolen from her pupils. —You weren't making that up, I said. —You couldn't make that shit up, she responded, holding her voice flat and cold. —So it was all true. —I didn't say that. I just said you couldn't make that shit up.

We're gonna get nailed for what we did, she said, later, as we ate breakfast. Around us truckers in their long-billed caps leaned into plates of food, clinking the heavy silverware, devouring eggs in communal silence. A waitress was dropping dirty dishes into the slop sink, lifting each of them up and letting them fall, as if to test the durability of high-grade, restaurant-quality plates. —We're gonna get nailed, I agreed. I wasn't up for an argument about it. The fact was, our stream of luck would go on flowing for a while longer. Then I'd lose Marsha and start searching for a Charlene. For his part, the world could devour plenty of Ernies; each day they vaporized into the country's huge horizon. —He's probably dead. He knew how to swim, but he didn't look too confident in his stroke. —Yeah, I agreed. Ernie had bobbed up to the surface shouting profanities and striking out in our direction with a weird sidestroke. His lashing hands sustained just his upper body. The rest was sunken out of sight and opened us up to speculation as to whether his boots were on or off. After he was tossed from the boat, he stayed under a long, long time. When he bobbed up, his face had a wrinkled, babyish look of betrayal. He blew water at us, cleared his lips, and in a firm voice said, —You're dead, man, both of you. Then he cursed my mother and father and the day they were born, Marsha's cunt and her ass and her mother and father and God and the elements and the ice-cold water of the seaway and the ship, which was about four hundred yards away (—come on, motherfuckers, save my ass). He kept shouting like this until a mouthful of water gagged him. We were swinging around, opening it up full-throttle, looping around, sending a wake in his direction and heading in. When we got to the breakwall we turned and saw that he was still out there, splashing, barely visible. The ship loomed stupidly in the background, oblivious to his situation. A single gull spiraled overhead, providing us with an omen to talk about later. (Gulls are God's death searchers, Marsha told me. Don't be fooled by their white feathers or any of that shit. Gulls are best at finding the dead.) Then we got back in Tull's truck and headed through town and out, just following roads north toward Houghton, leaving Ernie to whatever destiny he had as one more aberration adrift in the St. Lawrence Seaway system. For a long time we didn't say a word. We just drove. The radio was playing an old Neil Young song. We turned it up, and then up some more, and left it loud like that, until it was just so much rattling noise.

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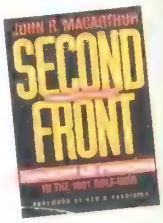

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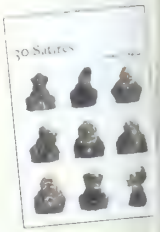
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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## HANGING OF HE GUARD

***ling betrayed in Iraq, part-time . soldiers may mutiny at the polls***

The ongoing deployment of America's "weekend warriors"—its National Guard and serve soldiers—represents a rkable but little debated shift in ional military policy. Last No- nber roughly 25 percent of the U.S. diers in Iraq came from the ranks of tional Guard and Reserve units; lay that figure is 40 percent, and is pected to rise. Since September 01, in service of the "War on Terism," more National Guard and Reve soldiers have been called to ac- e duty than had cumulatively been bilized since the Cuban Missile isis in 1962—including for the Viet- m War, the Cuban refugee crisis, iiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Gulf War Today's reservists serve longer tours duty, face more deployments, and e exposed to more dangerous com- t roles than at any time since the rean War. More than 135 part-time ldiers have been killed in Iraq so , lending a bitter double entendre to statement by Lt. Gen. H. Steven um, chief of the National Guard ureau, which oversees all Reserve rces. Commenting on the changing le of the Reserve soldier in the mod- n military, Blum said, bluntly: Weekend warrior is dead."

Since the Vietnam War, Guard and eserve soldiers had comfortably rid- en the myth, perpetuated by recruitent advertising ("Serve in Your Own ackyard"), that deployment into ombat zones was an unlikely outcome of their service. Many of them—especially National Guardsmen, who are used primarily as state militia—thought they would be serving their country "one weekend a month and two weeks a year" (as the recruiting slogan went) by fighting forest fires or sandbagging cresting rivers on the home front. Even during the massive Guard and Reserve mobilization dur-



ing the first Gulf War in 1991, reservists were kept largely out of harm's way as rear-guard support in Kuwait; not a single Guard soldier was killed in action. During the current Iraq war, however, these part-time soldiers, including mothers of five, fifty-something Vietnam veterans, poor college kids, and overweight middle-aged construction workers, have found themselves "downrange." Even members of the Guard's 147th Fighter Wing from Ellington Field, Houston—the unit in which Bush himself sporadically served—were sent into the fight in February 2003, near the Iraqi border.

Whereas President Lyndon Johnson decided that a draft was more politically palatable than widespread mobilization of the National Guard or Army Reserve during the Vietnam War, President Bush wagered that the opposite would be true today. This has proved a risky gamble. As Bush's main rationale for invading Iraq—Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction—has failed to materialize, many reservists say they never signed up to fight a preemptive war or to preside over a chaotic and deadly occupation. Resentment is building among a significant cadre of these citizen-soldiers, many of whom have been thrust into situations for which they did not train or reasonably expect to experience. Their families are, in many cases, even more apoplectic at the way their loved ones have been mobilized, often without warning or proper training or equipment. In what promises to be a close election, the 1.2 million Guard and Reserve soldiers and the many more millions of their family members represent a significant block of votes; and our President, despite his Guardsman past, may be well on his way to losing them.

As with so many of the consequences of the administration's poor postwar planning, problems with this heavy reliance on reservists were predictable. Even prior to the Iraq invasion, various federal, state, media, and internal Pentagon reports signaled that the reserve component had serious shortcomings, including questionable command ethics, retribution against whistle-blowers, equip-

ustrations by Tim Bower

ment shortages, and training defi-

ership to payroll problems

had had some problem with his or her

sary burden to their deployments. While battling the military's accounting bureaucracy, Chavez said, his soldiers "suffered divorces, bankruptcies, lost homes, and endured untold family problems that are far more destructive to their morale than any enemy they face in combat." The Pentagon has acknowledged, without giving firm numbers, that a troubling percentage of Reserve and Guard soldiers, who are on average older than active-duty personnel, were medically unfit for deployment. Some did not have the required physical examinations; many had been passed even though they should have been disqualified from service. According to Stephen Robinson, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center, commanders "decided to deploy as many bodies as possible to the mobilization sites, regardless of their condition."

Medically ready or not, many Guard and Reserve troops soon found themselves downrange without a flak jacket. Part-time soldiers often train with hand-me-down equipment, such as older vehicles and weapons, and many reservists are deployed with inferior gear. Stories leaked out about how the Reserve and Guard were under-equipped and ill-trained: Reserve soldiers were less likely to be given bulletproof "Interceptor" body armor or the "up-armored" Humvees that could withstand IEDs, the ubiquitous roadside bombs of the Iraqi resistance. Guard and Reserve units reported being short on everything from communications gear to navigation equipment, from ammunition to food and water. And although regular Army personnel were also short on body armor, fortified Hummers, and radios, Guard and Reserve units had it worse. This disparity became particu-

two groups' training, equipment, and

jury-rigged on top of a Vietnam-era truck, but wasn't given a single round of ammunition during a dangerous convoy. "They told me just look mean," the soldier said.

One disturbing result is that during the first nine months of the Iraq war, a disproportionate percentage of these Guard and Reserve soldiers were sick or injured. Although fatalities and wounded-in-action rates for Guard and Reserves are roughly similar to those for active-duty personnel, the rate of what the military calls DNBI—disease and non-battle injuries—has been nearly double among Reserve soldiers. The high rate of DNBI, which includes everything from accidents to pneumonia, is likely due to a combination of factors. Older soldiers tend to have more pre-existing medical conditions that are exacerbated in combat; they are more vulnerable to accidents because they train less frequently; and once they return home, medical problems mount. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs reported that in post-deployment assessments, Reserve and Guard units showed a 50 percent higher incidence of "health concerns," a 65 percent higher incidence of "medical/dental problems," and a 33 percent higher incidence of "mental health concerns" than did active-duty soldiers.

In the 2000 election, George Bush won critical last-minute votes from absentee military ballots, which tilted heavily in his favor. This time around, though, the military vote may not be so monolithic. In an unscientific poll taken by *Stars and Stripes* in October 2003, nearly 50 percent of part-time reservists and National Guard ranked their morale as "low" or "very low," compared with one third of regular Army troops, 14 percent of

Marines, and 6 percent of Air Fo
personnel who were surveyed. T
low morale was compounded after s
nies surfaced about reservists who w
warehoused in abominable conditio
and placed on "medical hold"—a m
dening bureaucratic limbo—at sta
side bases like Ft. Knox, Kentuc
and Ft. Stewart, Georgia. "There
no doubt about the resentment of
servists, their families, and their e
ployers regarding the repeated and
tended deployments they ha
experienced," says David Segal,
rector of the Center for Research
Military Organization at the Univ
sity of Maryland. "This is the first w
I can remember in which the nucle
of the antiwar movement was fou
not on college campuses but in F
serve households."

Although it has become a politi
truism that soldiers vote Republic
one wonders if the newest swing-v
er bloc to capture political operativ
imagination will be not the NASCA
Dad but rather the Reservist's Wi
Terri Lee, whose husband, Staff S
Timothy Lee, was deployed with t
Tennessee Army National Guar
1175th Transport Company out
Tullahoma, offers a litany of indig
ties that soldiers in her husband's co
pany suffered, including poor equ
ment, an extension of duty past t
promised year, and delays in rece
ing their $1,000-a-month extensi
bonus. As a result, she says, the hom
front families have been displaying a
mirable unit cohesion, though perha
not in the fashion that the comma
der in chief would prefer. "All of t
other wives have said, 'I won't v
for Bush again,'" says Terri. (As f
her own vote, Terri, who felt that Jo
Kerry slighted the National Guard
his criticisms of Bush's service reco
says she hasn't yet made up her min
Sheila Karpesky, whose thirty-nin
year-old husband, Sgt. Kevin
Karpesky, is a member of the 28th S
nal Battalion, a National Guard u
in Pennsylvania, says her husband
cently changed his voter registration
Democrat after voting for Bush in t
last election. She says she recent
fielded a request from her husband,

Marine, for a number of absentee ots to be sent to Iraq for like-mind- soldiers.

Even after the current wave of serve and Guard soldiers return ne from Iraq, the aftereffects of eir service will continue to unt. How those soldiers and their ilies will weigh their experience he polls in November remains an en question. But their tours of y are likely to make an indelible print on these men and women o expected, as their President did rty-five years ago, to serve their ntry without having to witness horrors of war firsthand.

—*Daniel Glick*

## AST STOP GAS

***eap oil, the only oil that matters, just about gone***

As gas prices rise, oil policy, to no one's great surprise, has become a major fixation of the presi- ntial candidates and their surrogates. t any given moment, they can be und debating how the United States ould persuade OPEC to bring down e price of crude or which candidate vors increasing gasoline taxes least. June the argument was over how uch oil there ought to be in the rategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). eorge Bush said we should fill it to e brim. John Kerry thought that just low the brim would be fine. In all of is back-and-forthing, however, nei- ier of the candidates has mentioned ne real problem facing American con- mers of petroleum and petroleum y-products. Like the Strategic Petro- um Reserve, the Earth itself has a mited storage capacity, and at some oint in the not-too-distant future, ne cheap oil that fueled 100 years of conomic growth will cease to exist.

The key here is a concept known s peak oil production. In 1956 the gro-physicist M. King Hubbert ob- erved that the production of oil from ny given field does not proceed moothly until the last drop of oil has een sucked from the ground but instead follows a long peaking curve. Once roughly half the oil has been extracted, it becomes harder—and more expensive—to get at the remainder. Daily production begins to fall off, and eventually the field is abandoned. Hubbert believed that this peak phenomenon (known today as Hubbert's Curve) could be seen at any scale—from a single field in Texas to all the fields in a country. Less than two decades later, Hubbert's theory was vindicated. In 1971 oil production in the United States hit a peak and began a long, slow decline that oil companies, despite much effort, have not been able to reverse.

Ultimately, such a peak must also occur globally. It doesn't mean that the oil will stop flowing overnight. But it does mean that oil producers will find it harder and harder, and, eventually, impossible, to raise their yearly production. And since demand will continue to rise (oil may be finite, but our energy appetites are not), the price of oil will head for the sky. The last time production fell seriously behind demand—the Iranian revolution of 1979—oil prices hit the modern-day equivalent of $80 a barrel and pushed the world into a deep recession. And keep in mind that this was a temporary disruption: a permanent decline in oil production (assuming we haven't found something new to burn) would be an economic catastrophe.



It gets worse. The term "peak" is misleading: it suggests a symmetrical curve, as if since it took a century or so to reach the peak it ought to take another century for production to fall to zero. Sadly, this isn't so. Because oil demand still will be rising even as production peaks, prices will jump, to $100 a barrel and more. Those high prices will inspire the oil industry: producers will redouble efforts to find more oil and, for a while, may manage to keep world production from falling. The peak, in other words, will look more like a plateau, and panic may subside. Unfortunately, this rush of new production means only that remaining reserves will go even faster, so when production finally does fall, the downward slope will be almost vertical.

Precisely when oil production will peak is a complex question. Pessimistic scientists say it already has. The optimists say perhaps we won't see a decline in production until 2035. Yet even the most optimistic forecasters agree on one thing: Within our lifetime, or the lifetime of our children, oil will cease to be the cheap, plentiful fuel that today provides 40 percent of the world's energy.

If a peak in oil production truly is imminent, why don't we hear more about it? One reason is history. Pessimists have been predicting an oil peak and associated mayhem since the late 1880s, and thus far the industry has proven them spectacularly wrong. During the gloomy 1970s, for example, many experts and even oil companies believed production would peak by the late 1990s. Instead, the high prices from the 1970s and early 1980s proved a powerful incentive for oil companies not only to look for more oil but to become much smarter about how they did it.

Indeed, in Hubbert's time, it was hard to know how much oil there was. Now, with seismic imaging, engineers can pinpoint the precise location of likely oil-bearing rocks. And with high-tech drills, they can reach ten miles underground, move in any direction—even horizontally—and electronically "smell" the presence of oil and gas. So good did oil companies get at finding and producing oil that, in the decade

after the Arab oil embargo, discovery rates soared, markets glutted, and [illegible] less than $10 a barrel that OPEC was nearly powerless to [illegible] sic example of a self-correcting market: high prices bring their own cure.

Not surprisingly, such steady successes have imbued the oil industry—and many governments as well—with a kind of permanent optimism. Not only do high oil prices make it profitable to extract previously "uneconomic" oil but, by funding the development of new technology and new methods, the high prices actually bring down the costs of getting that expensive oil. Case in point: Canada's vast deposits of oil-bearing tar sands, long regarded as too expensive to exploit, now can be refined economically into usable oil, and will only become more attractive as the price of oil rises. So, yes, oil may indeed be finite, oilmen will confess, but due to the magic of the marketplace we can keep pushing that end point into the indefinite future.

This optimism, however, seems to have reached a peak of its own. The industry has become startlingly proficient, but efficiency alone can't circumvent the most basic rule of the oil business—oil can't be produced unless it has been discovered. And here the optimists run into a real snag: despite all the new exploration gadgetry—and, in part, because of it—the industry is actually discovering less oil today than it was even ten years ago. In fact, although oil production has yet to hit its peak, oil discovery peaked in 1964. Since then the volume of newly discovered oil—that is, the number of barrels oil companies can find each year and put down on the books as "known" or "discovered" reserves—has on average steadily fallen each year. There have been exceptions—most recently the large finds in the Gulf of Mexico, offshore West Africa, and the Caspian Sea. But discoveries have again slumped and are now well below consumption: last year the world burned 25 billion barrels of oil, yet oil companies were able to discover just 8 billion barrels—less than one new barrel [illegible]

Oil optimists argue that the technology for oil discovery will also continue to improve. This is undoubtedly correct, but it just means that production will peak all the sooner. In the past, oil discovery was a gamble in which wildcatters would follow hunches, dig expensive holes to nowhere, and only occasionally hit a payoff. Now, because oil companies are so good at "seeing" where the oil is, nearly every pull is a jackpot. For example, when oil companies began to look for oil along the coast of Angola in the 1990s, seismic technology was so accurate that nearly every well drilled hit oil. But the converse was that companies could essentially see all the oil that was there right away. And, in fact, discovery rates in Angola have dropped off precipitously—a pattern that is repeated in nearly every new oil frontier. The discovery dilemma helps explain why oil companies like Shell have been struggling to meet production goals. But it also helps explain a new trend in geopolitical anxiety. Despite billions of dollars of industry investment, oil fields in Alaska, the Western Sedimentary Basin of Canada, and Britain's North Sea—formerly prolific provinces that once shielded the global economy from the machinations of OPEC—are today in steep decline. North Sea production peaked in 2002, Mexico may peak by 2005, and Nigeria could peak by 2007.

Even the Russian oil boom—which had persuaded the Bush Administration that America had a new and reliable non-Arab oil partner—now seems overstated. Russia may possess as many as 150 billion barrels, according to U.S. estimates, but that's still less than a fifth of the 850 billion barrels estimated to remain in the Middle East. Furthermore, most OPEC states are holding back their production in an effort to keep world supplies tight and prices high. But Russia, in an effort to maximize oil revenues today, has its taps wide open—a move that will have questionable effects on the nation's long-term economic health (some analysts believe Russia would be better conserving production and selling oil later, when prices are higher).

Oil production outside OPEC will likely peak by no later than 20[illegible] meaning that the United States, China, and other big importers will be forced to rely even more heavily on the one supplier they trust the least. That may seem like a worst-case scenario. But, in fact, OPEC faces a peak of its own—probably sometime [illegible] 2025, at which point prices will truly begin to rise. Again, the economy will adjust. Higher prices will reduce demand for oil. Prices will also make so-called unconventional oil much more appealing, though this, too, has limits. Canada's huge reserves of tar sand, for example, cannot be refined into [illegible] without generating vast quantities of carbon dioxide—forcing the choice between maintaining an oil-based economy and doing something to slow climate change. In all probability, we will by then have found a way to remove $CO_2$, but not without adding to the cost of using oil. In other words, while we may not ever run out of oil, we can already see the day when we will run out of cheap oil. And for an economy built on inexpensive crude that is the only peak that matters.

Policymakers seem unwilling even to hint that oil is a limited resource. Indeed, two of the proposals for "fixing" the current mess—releasing oil from the SPR or "jawboning" Arabs into pumping more oil—rest on the premise that today's oil problem is a temporary glitch in supply, when everyone knows not only that cheap oil is finite but that the longer we wait to find some new form of energy, the harder and more costly and disruptive the change will be. Yet such reluctance isn't surprising. To suggest that something is amiss would spook the markets and give massive political leverage to OPEC, and it would also run counter to the West's central organizing principle of nonstop economic growth. Those are all real problems. But simply pretending the oil will last forever is not a real solution.

—*Paul Rober*

# EFINING GRAFT

***oil industry may yet dodge the mup of MTBE***

The 768-page House energy bill of 2003 perished in the Senate not over general disasure with its contents but rather r a single gesture of excessive dness on page 290. Tucked ong the many corporate giveays in the $31 billion "Bill to Ence Energy Conservation and Rerch and Development and to vide for Security and Diversity in Energy Supply for the American ple" (as the act was fancifully tid by its sponsors) was a giveaway remarkable that it troubled the sciences even of some Senate publicans, six of whom were suffintly shamed to defy the party dership and pledge their votes inst it. The provision in question uld have extended blanket immuy from liability lawsuits to the kers of the gasoline additive TBE—shorthand for methyl terry-butyl ether, an unnatural subnce that has, through the good oes of the oil-refining businesses, en contaminating public water plies for twenty-five years.

Such an immunity would cost nerican taxpayers at least tens of lions of dollars and, in exempting lluters from cleaning up a mess ey created, would defy a principle common law dating back to the rteenth century. And yet the prosion is almost certain to resurface some form, especially if the Reblicans retain the White House or tend their majorities in Congress is fall. Rep. Joe Barton (R., Texas), airman of the House Committee Energy and Commerce, indicated e depth of his attachment to the libility shield in remarks to reporters March, implying in no uncertain rms that we have not seen the last MTBE immunity legislation. "If ie price of the energy bill is no safe arbor" for MTBE, Barton said, hen there won't be a bill." In fact, this June, the House repassed almost the exact same bill as a statement of political defiance.

Liability for MTBE pollution is a matter of considerable moment for oil refiners, who currently face 140 different lawsuits over the additive and have reason to expect hundreds more. This is because more than 1,500 municipal water supplies, spread across twenty-eight states, are already known to have been contaminated by MTBE. Cleaning these water supplies could cost as much as $140 billion, and hundreds more such sites are likely to be discovered; in other words, the MTBE cleanup might cost almost as much as the Iraq war. The cleanup process itself will be mammoth. Where the problem is severe, water supplies must be shut down and outside water imported, and in some cases treatment plants must be built. The treatment ranges from chemical processes—for example, oxidation, in which more chemicals are added to break the MTBE down into benign substances—to "manual" alternatives, such as simply diluting tainted water. All options take substantial amounts of time and money. In South Lake Tahoe, California, for example, which was especially hard hit, it has been estimated that the drinking-water supply will not be clean of MTBE for ten to twenty years. Before Santa Monica, California, settled its suit against oil companies last fall, the companies had been paying the city $3.25 million a year to import water from other sources.

As it waits patiently for its promised immunity, the refining industry refuses to stop selling MTBE-laced gas to the thirty states that still permit its use. Nor has it been willing to accept broad responsibility, opting to settle individual cases at the last moment rather than allow them to go to trial. The industry's reluctance on this latter score is understandable. In April 2002 a California jury found Shell, Texaco, Equilon, and Tosco guilty of irresponsibly manufacturing and distributing MTBE. The jury found, moreover, that both Shell and the Lyondell Chemical Company acted with "malice" by neglecting to warn customers of the dangers of MTBE water contamination. When such cases come to trial, this is precisely the sort of verdict that the industry can expect, because, in a courtroom, jurors can be educated in detail about just how unnecessary, predictable, and willful pollution from MTBE was and is.

Gasoline makers began adding MTBE to gasoline in the 1970s to boost octane, as a replacement for tetra-ethyl lead. Ironically, the threat of lead to human health, which had long been suspected by regulatory authorities and public-health experts but denied by industry, was not the driving force behind the replacement; it was, instead, the catalytic converter, the auto industry's response to new emissions regulations, that caused refiners to grudgingly phase out lead. In their search for a replacement, the refiners did not look far. Methyl tertiary-butyl ether is produced by adding methanol to isobutylene, a waste product that occurs during gasoline refining and that was (and is) regulated as a hazardous material by the EPA. Isobutylene's reuse in a gasoline additive, then, solved not merely the refiners' lead problem but also their isobutylene-disposal problem.

Unfortunately, as an ether, MTBE has a chemical attraction to water molecules. When it leaks with gasoline out of a storage tank, it races ahead to find groundwater. At the same time, it increases the solubility of other unwholesome components of gasoline, such as benzene, toluene, ethyl benzene, and xylene, allowing these known carcinogens to pollute drinking-water supplies. Also, MTBE biodegrades slowly, persisting in water for decades or more. (Much of the rest of the gas evaporates into the atmosphere, so before MTBE appears in drinking water, residents have likely had the chance to breathe in many of gasoline's other toxins too.)

MTBE does also oxygenate gasoline, allowing the gas to burn cleaner; under the 1990 Clean Air Act, oxygenation is required of some gasolines at various times of the year. Today, refiners have tried to insist

which, moreover, was entirely silent on how the oxygenation requirement could be met. Ethanol, unlike MTBE, can be distilled from crops, is biodegradable, and frequently does not contain petroleum impurities. It poses a human hazard and comparatively few environmental ones; it is renewable, clean-burning, and relatively nontoxic. It also has been long hated by the oil industry, which in the early twentieth century had to squelch ethanol as a competitor to gasoline. This longtime antipathy, plus the convenience to refiners of recycling their own waste product, helps to explain why MTBE, and not ethanol, became the oxygenate of choice.

Of course, all of this could have been avoided had the oil companies fixed their leaking tanks to begin with. When oil companies began adding MTBE to gas, they were fully aware that storage tanks leaked. As the California advocacy group Communities for a Better Environment noted in its 1998 lawsuit against oil and chemical companies, the American Petroleum Institute—the oil industry's leading trade and advocacy group—had established as early as 1969 an "underground leak prevention program," a clear acknowledgment that tanks were known to leak. In fact, according to Scott Summy, a Dallas attorney whose firm has won significant damages from oil companies for MTBE contamination, discovery documents turned over in litigation show that leaks in underground storage tanks were recognized to be a problem in the 1940s and 1950s. In January 1982 the *National Petroleum News*, a trade journal, called underground storage-tank leaks a "serious problem now—literally a million time bombs in the form of USTs [underground storage tanks] waiting to leak."

In 1980, when high concentrations of MTBE were found in the drinking water of Rockaway, New Jersey, Shell determined its own leaky storage tanks

Shell employees joked, in a draft for an internal newsletter later obtained by the Environmental Working Group, about what they thought MTBE should stand for: "Major Threat to Better Earnings," "Most Things Biodegrade Easier," and "Menace Threatening our Bountiful Environment" were among the witticisms. Exxon dealt with its own MTBE spill in 1980, in Jacksonville, Maryland; in August 1984, in an internal memo, an Exxon engineer cautioned that, "based on higher mobility and taste/odor characteristics of MTBE, Exxon's experiences with contaminations in Maryland and our knowledge of Shell's experience with MTBE contamination incidents, the number of well contamination incidents is estimated to increase three times following the widespread introduction of MTBE into Exxon gasoline." Exxon continued to use MTBE nevertheless.

In November 1986 scientists from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection and the University of Maine presented a paper titled "MTBE as a Groundwater Contaminant" at an industry-sponsored conference. The report detailed MTBE's solubility and speedy migration to groundwater, as well as its tendency to cause higher levels of contamination of other additives. The paper also explained why traditional remediation techniques were not successful for MTBE removal. In response, the industry simply tried to discredit the paper; a 1987 internal memo from the oil company Unocal noted that "[w]e don't have any data to refute comments made in the paper" but anounced plans to "develop data" on the subject.

The oil companies knew that MTBE was made from a hazardous by-product of gasoline, no components of which were safe to ingest, and they knew that it would leak into drinking water. And yet the industry did not test its effects on human health before putting it on the market, and the government failed either to compel it to do so or to do so itself. In 2000 the EPA, which has classified MTBE as a "potential human carcinogen," drafted plans to limit MTBE's use as an additive over the years, but upon taking office the Bush Administration moved quickly to cancel those plans. Now the additive is unlikely to be phased out entirely before 2015.

Republican officeholders are solicitous to MTBE producers for the predictable reasons. In 1999 and 2000 the top three producers of the additive—Lyondell, Valero, and Huntsman, which together produce more than half the nation's MTBE—contributed $338,000 to the Republican Party, Republican congressional candidates, and the presidential campaign of George W. Bush, while giving Democrats only half that amount. Three of the lead energy-bill negotiators—Barton, former House Energy Committee chair Billy Tauzin (R., La.), and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R., Texas)—have received sizable contributions from the companies: Lyondell has been the top single contributor to DeLay's 2004 reelection campaign, while Barton has received $36,000 in campaign contributions from Lyondell and Valero since the 2000 election cycle. In total, since 2000, the three corporations have given more than $1 million to Republicans. If, with such contributions, oil and chemical companies succeed in purchasing immunity for one of the great environmental torts of our age, they will have paid a very small price indeed.

—*Jamie Lincoln Kitman*

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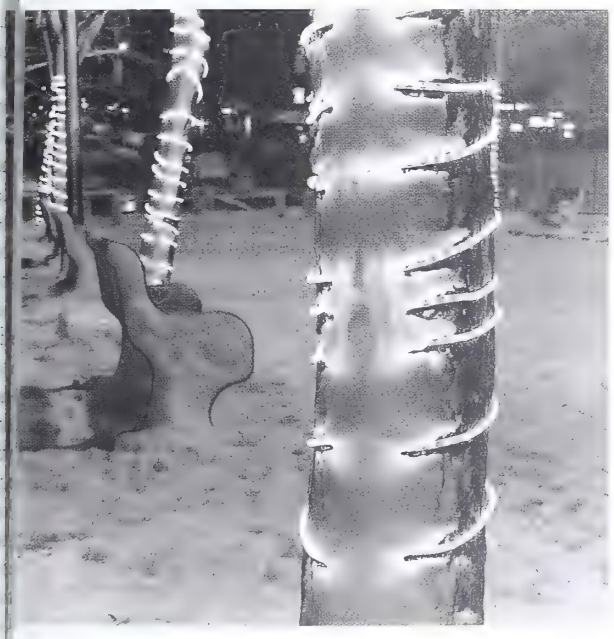
*Daniel Glick, a former Washington correspondent for* Newsweek, *is the author of* Monkey Dancing: A Father, Two Kids, and a Journey to the Ends of the Earth.

*Paul Roberts is the author of* The End of Oil: On the Edge of a Perilous New World. *His last article for* Harper's Magazine, *"Bad Sports," appeared in the April 2001 issue.*

*Jamie Lincoln Kitman is the New York bureau chief of* Automobile Magazine.

# NEW BOOKS

*By John Leonard*



On the next to last page of Orhan Pamuk's SNOW (Knopf, $26)—as if Nabokov and Rushdie had taken their circus act on the road, or Carlos Fuentes were Anatolian instead of Aztec, or Milan Kundera remembered how to laugh—a young student at a Turkish religious high school admonishes a novelist named Orhan Pamuk": "If you write a book set in Kars and put me in it, I'd like to tell your readers not to believe anything you say about me, anything you say about any of us. No one could understand us from so far away."

And yet, of course, it is this solemn boy, whose name is Fazil, and his best friend, Necip, who is shot to death before he can publish his science fictions, and the girls they love, who are suspended from school for refusing to remove their head scarves—it is these passionate, talkative, and pious young people, as pure of heart as they are self-righteous, who monopolize our attention. In the northern city of Kars, near the border with Armenia, God is real to them even if He is not to the secular intellectual and blocked poet Ka—the old friend Pamuk is supposed to be writing this book about—who has come by bus from Istanbul, in a blizzard, to investigate an epidemic of suicides.



Yes, a poet named Ka in a city named Kars. And *kar* means "snow" in Turkish. But having just returned for his mother's funeral after twelve years of exile in Germany following the 1980 military coup, Ka is really looking for love, roots, meaning, and his muse. Snow is not only a silence inside, reminding him of God; it also makes him feel at home in the world. So what if these true-believing students accuse him of atheism? So what if the newspaper reports his behavior a day in advance, and a night at the theater turns into *Marat/Sade*, and the gorgeous Ipek won't go to Frankfurt with him? Suddenly, he is writing poems again. Indeed, poems seem to seize or occlude him, like embolisms or a fit. He must retire immediately to a teahouse. Meanwhile, prisoners are tortured in red and yellow rooms. A minister of education is assassinated by a fundamentalist nut. A terrorist fresh from Bosnia coaches disaffected students. The Party of God may win the municipal elections. And so when the snow cuts Kars off from the rest of the country, the army, the police, and a very Brechtian repertory theater troupe stage a coup, a parody of 1980, that gives a whole new meaning to politics as performance.

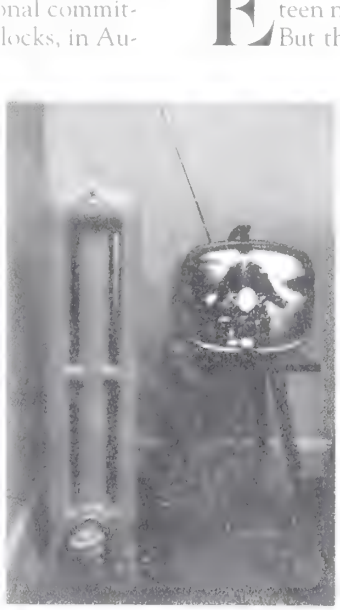
When they aren't watching television, everyone in *Snow* is telling everyone else a story, as in *The Arabian Nights* or in "the way it seemed the heroes told their stories to the authors of the European novels." This is playful, postmodern Pamuk, the author of *The White Castle* and *My Name Is Red*, who nods in passing at Oedipus, Robespierre, Stendhal, Mallarmé, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Conrad. But in its sendup of romantic poetry, political theater, and the anthropological relationship between Marxism-Leninism and anti-Western nationalism, *Snow* is also written by the man who got into trouble for supporting the rights of Kurds and opposing Iran's fatwa on Rushdie. And now this third Pamuk, more serious about faith than about poetry, makes fun of intellectuals like himself even as he acknowledges the bull's-eye on his back. From the Golden Horn, with a wicked

hotograph by Arvind Garg (left); *Socrates and His Students*, a miniature from al-Mubashshir, ukhtar al Hikam, 13th c.; Guardian/ [illegible]; ue Mosque in Yerevan, Armenia, by P[illegible]

delirious New York, the family secrets [illegible] periments of marriage and children, [illegible] points, writing and teaching at [illegible] the third in her projected quartet of fictions on a calendar grid. After the winter of discontent and expiation in [illegible] (1999), and the complicated Easter bunnies of redemption and renewal in *Big As Life* (2001), now this long hot summer in Hollywood, New England, and El Salvador. If you're still wondering who Artie's real father was, *The Silver Screen* will tell you. But you need never even have heard of Artie to enjoy this interrogation of the way we tell ourselves stories, mythologizing our ordinary lives, on big screens (*Singin' in the Rain*) and small ones (television documentaries), in books by Dante, Donne, and Chekhov, in photographs by Georgia O'Keeffe and Walker Evans, in testimony to federal agents and congressional committees, in Ovid and Goldilocks, in Augustine and Freud. And when we aren't making stories and [illegible] ing clocks and guns.

Isabel Mahler quits her career in silent movies to return to Rhode Island [illegible] sidekick Tim Murphy and to mother Joe, their son, who [illegible] priest; Rita, their daughter, [illegible] comes a physical therapist and Gemma, the girl next door, elopes with the redwoods with Ansel Adams and comes out with [illegible] Tinker Bell to these children, taking them on ex[illegible] New Bedford. So when the music of [illegible] march, do they blame her for having been too thrilling—Joe, because of his loss of faith after the murder of Archbishop Romero; Rita, because of the lovelessness that led her into the Witness Protection Program; Gemma, because of her feelings of fraudulence [illegible] *How were we caught? What, what is it has happ[illegible] What is it that has happened ing that we are living the way we are? The children are no longer the way it seemed they might be.*"

Some catechism. Throughout this brilliant novel, there is quite a lot of the Mexican Day of the Dead, of paper skeletons and sugared skulls. Gemma apostrophizes Bel's ghost: "I did not want you to be over, like silent movies or the Keith Circuit, like beauty, like instruction, like belief." But history, that myth-muncher, kills us all. The best we can hope for, after the strut and fret, may be this comfort: "We do not play to an empty house."



Every one of Ward Just's fourteen novels has been political. But they've also been historical and anthropological, as we follow men, money, and power from Chicago east, like Theodore Dreiser. And romantic and mournful and abashed, as if Scott Fitzgerald went out on the town while his Dorian Gray rotted in an attic. And as quiet as they are disquieting, like the bullet-riddled skull in the study of the Freudian psychiatrist in UNFINISHED SEASON (Houghton [illegible], $24). If Just in his fiction of- [illegible] gested in sinister ellipses, gnomic haikus, mordant witticisms—here [illegible] confines himself mostly to a single [illegible] In the summer of 1954, nineteen-year-old Wilson Ravan loses two [illegible] thers, finds a vocation, falls in lo[illegible] and is almost fired from his job at [illegible] Chicago tabloid newspaper ("a carnival of love nests, revenge killings, slumlords, machine graft, and Communists deep in the apparatus of state and national government") because he arrives at work still wearing dancing shoes from a North Shore debutante ball the night before.

I don't want to tell you who dies or why, except that, as in Orhan Pamuk and Maureen Howard, history is the real killer. Wilson hasn't entered the University of Chicago yet, but he is as much a victim of the Bataan Death March, the Taft-Hartley Act, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons as any of the adults. We rather point to the frozen pond where his businessman-father pretends to play ice hockey on winter afternoons, as if he were back at college at Dartmouth; the herd of deer moving at night across the golf course fairway; the jazzmen in the smoky Chicago dives winking at the white boys; the tabloid reporters poised at their typewriters, as if the machine "were a small animal or the skin of a woman . . . birds building nests one twig at a time"; Aurora, the girl whose voice has the timbre of an oboe; and surprisingly affecting cameo appearances by Adlai Stevenson and Marlon Brando.

Somehow, more like Camus than Fitzgerald, these characters rise from depths to surface—from a hand of pinochle to the baby-blue helmets of the United Nations, from a bridge through a window to Van Gogh's ear, from John O'Hara to *Othello*—with the defining gestures of shadow puppets, a kind of frozen Wintergarden Palace theater from which we are all lucky to escape alive. What is once again remarkable about this writer are the graceful figure-eights he skates around his bone-deep knowledge of the worst about us, our Caribans and Brothers Grimm.

[illegible] Tinfinder from "The Little Series" [illegible] Comics, Fremdel Orders, San Francisco

# LYING UP AND FLYING OWN

## ıe rise and fall of the American superhero

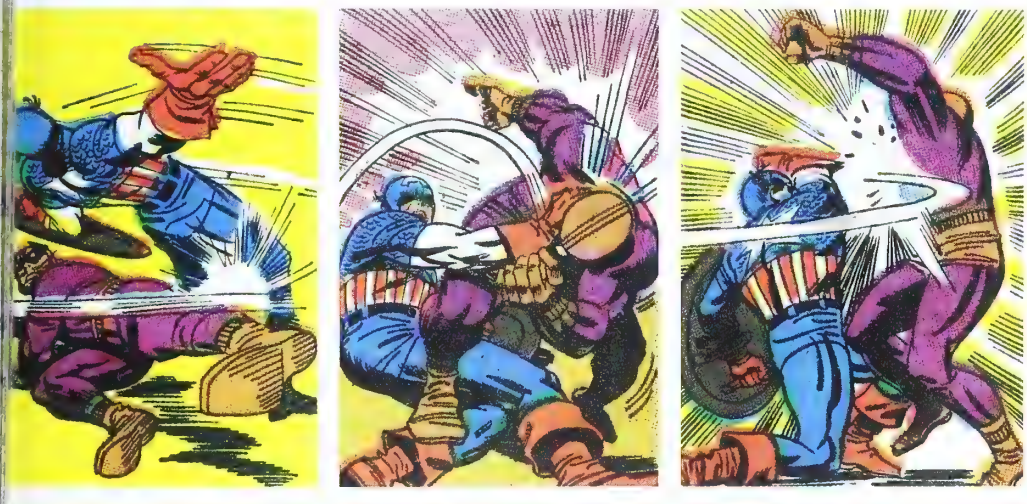
*Wyatt Mason*

ıssed in this essay:

*Our Regards to the Atomsmashers! Writers on Comics*, edited by Sean Howe. antheon, 2004. 228 pages. $24.95.

*Silver Age of Comic Book Art*, by Arlen Schumer. Collectors Press, 2003. 76 pages. $29.95.

*hology: The DC Comics Art of Alex Ross*, by Chip Kidd and Geoff Spear. 'antheon, 2003. 240 pages. $35.



ately, the superhero comic, a childhood enthusiasm long thought best abandoned to the age, is insinuating itself into every ılt arena. This domain of great-mpkin muscles and bridge-cable ews, of medicine-ball breasts that ain both fabrics and common sense, extending its borders. A trip to the ıltiplex has long been unthinkable thout one mega-budget comic-book aptation or another awaiting us thin, whether the *Superman* and *Bat-in* franchises of yore or the more re-nt *Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, *Blade*, *Dare-devil*, *Punisher*, *Hellboy*, and *Hulk* (the latter directed, no less, by a celebrated auteur). And on television, when we're not watching the youthful adventures of Clark Kent in *Smallville*, we can expect to find his adult, animated form doing shtick with Jerry Seinfeld as they shill for American Express, while Batman pimps for OnStar.

But it is in our bookstores that the pervasiveness of this expansion may most clearly be understood. The Humor section, which once grudgingly gave space to the odd book on superheroes (Jules Feiffer's 1965 *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, James Steranko's 1970 *History of Comics*), has been supplemented by another shingle—Graphic Novels—beneath which books on comics and long-form comic books have proliferated. And a real surprise is to be found in the Literature section, where a host of respected writers of a certain age can't seem to resist the comic book. In Rick Moody's novel *The Ice Storm*, the narrator parallels the ordinary human upheavals of a Connecticut family of four with the internecine quarrels of a quartet of New York superheroes, the Fantastic Four (who, as it happens, get their own movie next year). Michael Chabon wrote a comic-book-themed, Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, and, since then, he has become a de facto ambassador for the genre. When not appearing in documentaries on the subject or being asked to write screenplay adaptations of superhero material (early drafts of *X-Men*, *Spider-Man 2*), Chabon has turned to writing a comic himself, *The Escapist*, its eponymous hero an export from the pages of *Kavalier & Clay*. Bryan Dietrich's *Krypton Nights*, a book-length suite of poems devoted to Superman and his friends and foes, even won *The Paris Review*'s poetry prize in 2001, with no less an arbiter than Richard Howard calling it "a remarkable contribution to American literature." And Jonathan Lethem, in his recent novel *The Fortress of Solitude* (a title alluding to Superman's arctic getaway), explores the milieu in which adolescent boys and comic books collide.

As prevalent as superheroes have become in the culture, it is perhaps difficult to believe that they are a relatively recent addition. The first example of the genre remains its most enduring and best known: appearing in the inaugural issue of *Action Comics* in June of 1938, Superman gave birth to an archetype. Although there are many precedents for heroes of superhuman strength throughout literature (Gilgamesh, Hercules, Beowulf, Pan-

*yatt Mason's last review for* Harper's *agazine, "There Must I Begin to Be," ap-ıred in the April issue.*

ıptain America Battles the Franco-villain Baron the Leaper, by Jack Kirby and Frank Giacoia, 57 © Marvel Characters, Inc. From *The Silver* [illegible] *Comic Book Art*, by Arlen Schumer.

tagruel), and for costumed heroes with dual identities (The Scarlet Pimpernel, The Shadow, Zorro), and for caped adventurers (The Three Musketeers, Hash Gordon), there was a significant difference to twenty-three-year-old writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster's creation. Yes, their Superman was Samson-strong and coat-of-many-colors-costumed, but the nature of his secret identity was without precedent. As Les Daniels observes in *Superman: The Complete History*, Superman wasn't hiding his heroics behind the blasé alter ego of a wealthy aristocrat:

> Superman's other self, Clark Kent, was a horse of another color, since Siegel and Shuster stripped him of any vestige of the exotic. They patterned him after themselves, almost masochistically, making him timid, myopic, working class, and socially maladroit.

That each of us might conceal reserves of strength beneath our patent fragility—that we might have hidden within us qualities that, exposed to the world, would win us its enduring favor rather than lasting shame—was deeply appealing. Siegel and Shuster, physically unprepossessing young Jewish men who read muscle-building magazines and science-fiction and adventure stories, had no illusions about what girded this aspect of their creation. During his high school years, Siegel recalls in an interview,

> I had crushes on several attractive girls who either didn't know I existed or didn't care I existed. . . . It occurred to me: What if I was real terrific? What if I had something special going for me, like jumping over buildings or throwing cars around or something like that? Then maybe they would notice me.

Still, it is one thing to acknowledge that a writer has hit upon a potent metaphor ("Gregor Samsa awoke after troubled dreams to find himself transformed into an enormous dung beetle") and very much another to watch



imagination of an era. For within five [illegible] to the month [illegible] different [illegible] fledgling industry. Even more significantly, hundreds of new superheroes sprouted in Superman's wake like sea monkeys, expanding onto the pages of new titles that, at their peak, enjoyed a readership estimated to have reached 50 to 70 million juvenile hearts every month.

Despite the sartorial variations offered by The Shield, Captain Battle, Captain America (and kid-sidekick Bucky Barnes), The Sub-Mariner, Captain Marvel, The Human Torch (and kid-sidekick Toro), Bulletman, Blue Bolt, The Hangman (and *two* kid-sidekicks), there was an underlying sameness that accounts for their great commercial appeal. All superhero comics of the era manifested a timely, punitive worldview. These were war years, and it was rare to find a superhero-comic cover that did not feature a swastika or a flag of the rising sun over which the costumed heroes stormed. Rarer still not to see a Nazi (occasionally fanged) or a Japanese soldier (often canary-yellow-skinned and buck-toothed) getting the stuffing knocked out of him from air, sea, or ground. On a couple of comic-book pages that ran in a February 1941 issue of *Look* magazine—nearly two years before the American entry into the war—we see Super[man] swooping into Germany on a mi[ssion] in which he disables Nazi artil[lery] ("Just let 'em try firing now!"), s[nat]ches up Hitler ("You're coming with m[e]" flies to Moscow ("Put me down! Y[ou're] hurting me!"), grabs Stalin ("Joe, [you] Adolf!"), and drops the pair off at [the] League of Nations in Geneva ("G[en]tlemen, I've brought before you [the] two power-mad scoundrels respo[nsi]ble for Europe's present ills"), w[hile] they are swiftly found guilty of [unpro]provoked aggression against defe[n]less countries."

As apparently charming as this [sce]nario might be, it conceals a troub[ling] naïveté. In *Comic Book Superhe[roes] Unmasked*, a documentary film on [the] subject, Michael Chabon observe[s]:

> There was a sort of irony in the fact [that] these characters, many of whom in [the] golden age had been evolved to f[ight] the Nazis, were themselves very muc[h] the Nazi ideal. . . . The idea that you [can] solve problems thro[ugh] physical strength by b[eing] stronger and more d[omi]nating and more pow[erful] that is fascism. And I d[on't] think that the creato[rs] the superheroes—or [the] kids that were rea[d] them—were the sligh[test] bit aware of it.

Whether they w[ere] aware of the Fascist [un]dertones of superh[ero] comics, the Fascists w[ere] certainly aware of sup[er] heroes. Brandishin[g] comic book durin[g a] Reichstag meeting[in] early 1940, Hitler's p[ro]paganda minister, Jose[f] Goebbels, deemed [Su]perman "a Jew." And [in] a subsequent issue of the weekly [SS] newspaper, *Das schwarze Korps*, [one] finds the following excogitation:

> Jerry Siegel, an intellectually and phy[si]cally circumcised . . . Israelite nam[ed] this pleasant guy with an overdevelo[ped] body and underdeveloped mind "Sup[er]man." He advertised widely Superma[n's] sense of justice, well-suited for imitati[on] by the American youth. . . . He c[ried] "Strength! Courage! Justice!" to the [no]ble yearnings of American children. [In]stead of using the chance to encour[age]

[illegible] "The Man Who Could Cause Real Terror, the Inhuman Lex Luthor Lets Loose His Scorn, Scream," by Jack K[irby] and Joe Sinnott, 1966; and "Dr. Strange in His Sanctum Sanctorum," by Steve Ditko [illegible] Mindy Newell, Jack Dann, *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art*, by Allen Schu[ltz]

ally useful virtues, he sows hate, sus-
cion, evil, laziness and criminality in
eir young hearts.... Woe to the Amer-
an youth, who must live in such a poi-
ned atmosphere and don't even no-
e the poison they swallow daily.

t superheroes—little more than a
after their creation—would have
stered on the radar of the Reich
t was advancing across Europe is
ament to the wild surge in popu-
y commanded by this "poison."

After the war, though, the genre slipped from prominence. Once the real enemy had been ailiated, once the real cost of the could be seen in images of what v seems grotesque to call "camps," sumers had no enthusiasm for sto- about crushing the Axis horde. ch comics sat at newsstands un- imed. Pragmatically, companies ted their focus. "When something t selling," said Stan Lee, a leader in industry, "you don't feel senti- ntal about it, you just wonder what i did wrong." So Lee and others be- to churn out material that did sell: es of cowboys and crime for boys, l romance for girls.

By the mid-fifties, after another war l ended, superheroes had largely en forgotten. Superman, Batman, l Wonder Woman carried on, but in w forms. Wonder Woman settled putes via diplomacy and a golden so; Batman battled the dread men- e of giant bees; Superman spent a of time bailing out Jimmy Olsen, aster of disguise," "Boy of 100 ces." That they had maintained emselves as commercial possibilities all drove other companies to resus- ate their superheroes, even though ch efforts were met with active re- tance. Goebbels, it turned out, was rdly the only person who had be- ved superheroes poisonous. In 1954 ychiatrist Dr. Frederic Wertham, a rmer director of the "mental hygiene" inic of Bellevue Hospital, published ook called *Seduction of the Innocent. he Influence of Comic Books on To- y's Youth*. The Tipper Gore of his me, Wertham believed that comic ooks were dangerous material for chil- en. Superheroes, Wertham explained the Senate Subcommittee to In- estigate Juvenile Delinquency of 1954, "arouse in children phantasies of sadistic joy in seeing other people punished over and over again while you yourself remain immune. We have called it the Superman complex." Wertham also objected to the sexuality he believed was being promoted on their pages, which he saw as criminally deranged. Batman and Robin were clearly, dangerously, gay:

> They live in sumptuous quarters, with beautiful flowers in large vases.... It is like a wish dream of two homosexuals living together. Sometimes they are shown on a couch, Bruce reclining and Dick sitting next to him, jacket off, collar open, and his hand on his friend's arm.

If these observations sound amusingly puritanical and harmlessly ridiculous, their effects were calamitous. Like an opening act for Joseph McCarthy, Wertham and his accusations became national news. Comic-book circulation, already reduced, dropped by half; companies collapsed, readership evaporated. The industry was nearly erased, along with the reputations of those who worked in the business. As John Romita, one of the more respected comic artists of the past fifty years, said of the time, "We used to say we were in commercial illustration rather than admit to being comic book artists."

Although it is true that the superhero comics of the Golden Age (c. 1938–1950) exhibited a level of punitive violence that both helped make them popular and guaranteed their near extinction, it is also true that those superhero comics by which they were replaced in the 1960s manifested a conflicted relationship with the uses and abuses of might. For at the advent of what has come to be called the medium's Silver Age, beginning sometime in the mid-fifties and persisting through the mid-seventies, there was a sudden preoccupation with risks of power. Whereas in the Golden Age power had been the answer that solved everything, in the Silver Age power became the question that undermined everyone.

This had everything to do with the fear of atomic Armageddon. The atom bomb, which had ended the war, now risked ending the world. And so, while Bob Dylan began singing "Talkin' World War III Blues" at the end of 1962—

> Time passed and now it seems
> Everybody's having them dreams.
> Everybody sees themselves
> Walkin' around with no one else.

—Stan Lee and Jack Kirby of Marvel Comics were inventing heroes whose superpowers derived from the radiation of which everyone was so afraid. Thus Peter Parker, a dorky college student, is bitten by a radioactive arachnid that, rather than kill him, gives him the creature's attributes amplified a hundredfold. Bruce Banner, an army scientist, is belted by radiation during the test of a gamma-bomb that, rather than reduce him to chalk, turns him into the Hulk. Matt Murdock, a sweet little kid, gets knocked in the head by a runaway barrel of radioactive waste. Rather than melt him in his Keds, it just blinds him... and heightens his remaining senses to the superheroic proportions of a Man Without Fear. And then there's the tale of four astronauts blasting into orbit in an improperly shielded spacecraft to get a jump on the Commies in the race to the Moon. Bombarded by radioactive cosmic rays, each mutates into a powerful, elemental force: one, an obdurate Thing made of rock; another, a hot-headed Human Torch; a third, able to stretch his (Mr.) Fantastic body with liquid fluidity; and a last, able to turn as invisible as air, an Invisible Girl: *Quod erat* the Fantastic Four.

Unlike the Golden Age narratives, which were comedies (its heroes always emerging from their narratives in better straits than at their beginnings), the Silver Age tales were tragedies: its heroes lifted the plague from the land but went blind in the process, or worse. Just as Aristotle believed that tragedy was a higher form than comedy, most readers found the Silver Age heroes a better read than the Golden Age ones. Two new books, *Give Our Regards to the Atomsmashers!* and *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art*, amply document how these new comics differed from those of the past and why readers responded to them as passionately as they did. *Atomsmashers* contains seventeen essays, a dozen devoted to superhero comics, the remainder split between alternative comics, newspaper strips, and for-

eign imports. By a range of accomplished writers—among them Jonathan Lethem, Luc Sante, Gary Giddins, and Greil Marcus—the essays might be said to describe what distinguishes superhero comics from other pulp fictions and to evoke the context in which their authors, long ago, found themselves susceptible to their strategies and charms.

[illegible] with a realm of masturbation, of personal arcana.

And indeed, [illegible] on comics here seems quite arcane. The essays in *Atomsmashers* feature an unfortunate number of instances

("smart guy") are unlikely to [illegible] vince ("take my word for it") [illegible] specialists that superhero comics [illegible] serve much scrutiny. Comics, [illegible] any art form, can "suffer in [illegible] retelling" (I'd rather see *Hamlet* [illegible] hear a summary of it), but [illegible] doesn't mean that nothing m[illegible] thoughtful can be said about th[illegible]



Many of the writers gathered here are aware of the complications of distance. Most are not writing as current enthusiasts of comics but rather as advocates for how fundamental the appeal of comics once was to them. Geoffrey O'Brien tells us that this appeal is difficult to pinpoint at a distance of decades: "To reenter the world of comic books as experienced while growing up in the fifties and sixties is like tracing, through garbled lore and remnants of ritual life, a lost pastoral tradition." Christopher Sorrentino, similarly, is "a forty-year-old-person who has spent his adult life *not* reading comic books." And Lethem, after stumblingly attempting to articulate his past enthusiasm for his favorite comics—"I mean, I mean, I) accept my (own) premise (and why shouldn't I?) that the mid to late sixties *Fantastic Fours* were the exemplary specimens, the veritable *Revolver* and *Rubber Soul* and *White Album* of comics . . ."—soon interrupts his unspoolings of ifs and thens to confess:

> I'm breaking down here. The royal *we* and the presumptive *you* aren't going to cut it. This is a closed circuit, me and the comics which I read and which read me, and the reading of which by one mother, me and the

in which attempts at precision, at pinning down particulars, fall flat. Too often, stabs at conveying the excitement of a comic book devolve into self-doubting babble. "I fear I'm losing you," Lethem admits at one point. This confession is useful, at least for being candid about how difficult it is to discuss the medium directly. Brad Meltzer, alas, has no such misgivings:

> In 1982, *New Teen Titans*, written by Marv Wolfman, and drawn oh-so-exquisitely by George Perez, was easily the best book on the market (that's right, I said it—and yes, smart guy, I'm well aware that the Byrne Claremont *X-Men* was being published at the same time). Made up of the "junior" superheroes of the DC Universe, the Titans brought together such mainstays as Robin, Kid Flash, and Wonder Girl . . . and Changeling, a young, green (yes, green) fifteen-year-old class clown who could change into green animals (yes, green, and yes, animals). As I type those words, I'm reminded that comics always suffer in the retelling, but take my word for it, the alchemy between Wolfman and Perez created a vehicle for stories that redefined what comic book characterization was all about.

Meltzer's name-dropping, his winking, dismissively knowing tone

than that they featured "green (y[illegible] green)" characters drawn "o[illegible] so-exquisitely."

Fortunately, many of the contri[illegible] utors fare better. Growing up in t[illegible] English Cotswolds, Geoff Dyer fou[illegible] that comic books provided him wi[illegible] "the first sense of discrimination [illegible] the visual arts." They were means [illegible] exploring a world not his own, of b[illegible] ing able "to feel imaginatively [illegible] home in . . . the architecture of Ma[illegible] hattan." Similarly, Chris Offut[illegible] growing up in the hills of easter[illegible] Kentucky, found that comic bool[illegible] offered him visual stimulation th[illegible] was absent from his life: "There we[illegible] no museums or art galleries in A[illegible] palachia. . . . The result was my a[illegible] solute reliance on comic books f[illegible] visual art of any kind."

Several of the essays mention ho[illegible] comics cultivated their reader's ey[illegible] for art. Dyer explains how he "co[illegible] lected whichever issues of any comi[illegible] happened to be drawn by particula[illegible] artists," and Glen David Gold bega[illegible] to pay attention to what made a[illegible] artist's work "so distinctive I woul[illegible] never again mistake it for anyon[illegible] else's." In one of the few essays i[illegible] *Atomsmashers* not devoted to super[illegible] heroes, Luc Sante observes how on[illegible] artist's style mirrored the moral uni[illegible]

[illegible]

e of the story it served—in
h villains act like villains, and
es have pure souls:

> ıe clear moral line is beautifully ar-
> ulated by [*Tintin* creator] Hergé's
> aphic style, which is in fact called
> lear line." . . . He enclosed every par-
> :le of the visible, no matter how fluid
> ıd shifting, in a thin, black, unhesi-
> ting line. . . . The style makes the world
> ɔnderfully accessible, in effect serving
> an analogue to its hero's mission.

ante's observation of that clear
k line in *Tintin* can be broad-
d to apply to most comics, and
ainly to superhero comics. The
writing in *Atomsmashers* elabo-
s on this interplay of style and
tance, though it is another book,
*Silver Age of Comic Book Art*,
t embodies it. Arlen Schumer,
book's writer and designer, is no
an enthusiast than the writers in
*msmashers*. But whereas the latter
looking back at what they used
ike (and for which they reserve
timental, sometimes incoherent
husiasm), Schumer is showing us
at he still actively admires. A
nic-book artist and historian of
medium who has lectured exten-
ely on his subject, Schumer comes
ıed with a comprehensive knowl-
ge of the material. And unlike
*ɔmsmashers*, which seems more ap-
ɔpriately read by enthusiasts of
nics who will catch allusions and
references to names that are
ntioned but never explained, *The*
*ver Age of Comic Book Art* is a
ok for anyone. I have shared it
h a range of people who had be-
ved superhero comics were noth-
g more than soft-core pornography
emotionally stunted semiliterates
d watched them become unself-
nsciously engrossed for hours.

This is very much, and very liter-
y, by design. Although Schumer
ıs written a perceptive, original
eatise on the medium, even better
the cunning visual ploy by which
has insinuated this treatise into
e proceedings. As he says in the
eface: "I took license here and
ere to drop out the original word
alloon and caption text [of the
ɔmics] in favor of artists' quotes or
y own prose. My justification is




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comic book artists and their work." Representing, for example, a scene of hand-to-hand combat between Captain America and his foe Zemo by Jack "King" Kirby, Schumer replaces the original words from existing thought balloons with Kirby's own explanations of how he approached visual storytelling. In other words, as one turns from page to page, one reads this art book like a comic book. It seduces the novice by the very means that have long delighted the aficionado.

In addition to inviting us to ogle these local delights, the larger structure of *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* provides deeper pleasures. Each of its eight sections is devoted to a different artist. Within these, Schumer quotes from vast bodies of work, selecting images that are illustrative of the accomplishment of each artist—expositions carefully curated to showcase particular talents. We see an evolution from the simple, evocative, cartoonish figures of Steve Ditko, Spider-Man's visual inventor, toward the realistic images of Neal Adams—the finest natural draftsman ever to work in comics, the medium's DaVinci.

Through Schumer's presentation of that evolution, what emerges most clearly is a quality one associates least with superheroes: their fragility. And this vulnerability is the very essence of the medium's Silver Age, why its characters recaptured the imaginations of readers and set fire to decades of cultural proliferation. Whereas the Clark Kent of the Golden Age—his bumbling, his meekness—was a ruse by Siegel and Shuster that charmed children into believing that they too contained hidden Supermen, the creations of the Silver Age were intensely, believably vulnerable. They bled, they lost loves, they lost worlds. Their turmoil was legible in the thought balloons that puffed out around their faces like pained breaths. When Green Arrow's sidekick dies from a heroin overdose, we see Arrow—past helping and beyond consolation—with tears streaming down his

but gained the ability to voyage through the universe, has even that [illegible] as well: him [illegible] prison which men call Earth." And in Ben Grimm we meet the [illegible] man hidden within the rocky, powerful, orange Thing that radiation has made of him. Although he fears no man, we learn of the alienation he feels, from others and self, so much so that he resists the touch of his blind girlfriend, lest even her fingers find him repulsive (which they never do). Seduced by vividly imagined surfaces, we quickly find ourselves plunged into murkily real emotional depths. For, like all literature, these comics help us get out of ourselves and into the minds and hearts of others. As Adams tells Schumer, "You not only saw these superheroes as superheroes, you saw them as human beings."

*I Go Ape: On Regards to the Atom smashers!* and *The Silver Age of Comic Book Art* conspire to give us a sense of why superhero comics became popular again throughout the sixties and seventies, *Mythology: The DC Comics Art of Alex Ross*, helps explain the current boom. At thirty-four, Ross is the most popular and successful of current superhero-comic creators, co-plotting, with a handful of writers, all the stories he illustrates. His books routinely sell in the millions, and his style is admired by a generation of imitators. Over the past decade, Ross has defined and driven the medium to a Platinum Age of prominence.

At first glance, it is easy to see why. It would seem that Ross's work represents the fullest expression of the Silver Age imperative that equalled the "super" and the "human"—after all, his heroes look more like people in the real world (albeit very, very big people) than anywhere in the history of comics. In a tight, realistic style that recalls the work of contemporary fine artist Mark Tansey as much as that of commercial illustrator Norman Rockwell, Ross paints his pages. "Hopefully," Ross has said, "by

painting the work, you gain a [illegible] of life and believability that [illegible] draw the reader in a little more.

> I wanna get just about everyb[illegible] card by my hands on. I wanna [illegible] the guys who are gettin' concert [illegible] ets to buy my comics. I wanna [illegible] the girls who are going to see N[illegible] to buy my comics. I want everyb[illegible] I want your parents. I want your [illegible] dren who aren't even born yet.

That one's medium could reach [illegible] many minds as possible is perfe[illegible] reasonable—it is any artist's h[illegible] That it would appeal to every ge[illegible] tion and taste without some so[illegible] compromise is another matter. R[illegible] comics offer an experience calcul[illegible] to please but unlikely to transp[illegible] They are designed to be consu[illegible] not digested. *Mythology* reveals t[illegible] how deliberate and consistent [illegible] design has been. We see the cra[illegible] drawings and sketches Ross made [illegible] young boy that show him doing w[illegible] many did and do—copy cover[illegible] comic books, favorite panels, p[illegible] Imitation, of course, is always [illegible] means by which the young artist [illegible] pursues originality. But what is p[illegible] haps most original in Ross's wor[illegible] that he has never left imitation [illegible] hind. Throughout *Mythology*, R[illegible] returns to classic images in the hi[illegible] ry of comics and redoes them [illegible] way, in paint. Nevertheless these [illegible] not, as the title *Mythology* would s[illegible] gest, reimaginings of the old stor[illegible] such as Ovid's revisitings of Hesi[illegible] say, that enlarge our idea of the [illegible] roes they feature. Rather, they [illegible] bloated orchestrations, like a sy[illegible] phony playing arrangements of L[illegible] Zeppelin: kinda cool, but if you're [illegible] terested at all, you'd probably pre[illegible] the original.

Reading a Ross comic, one s[illegible] the irresistible, breakneck creativ[illegible] on view in *The Silver Age of Co*[illegible] *Book Art* gelded, the emotions r[illegible] ing there tamed. One gets the sa[illegible] sense Daniel Mendelsohn had wh[illegible] watching a Quentin Taranti[illegible] movie—"that you're in the preser[illegible] not of a creator but of a member [illegible] the audience—one who's incapa[illegible] of saying anything about real life [illegible] cause everything he knows con[illegible] from the movies." Except, of cour[illegible]

everything Ross knows comes comics:

'as not a big reader, so I was not ab- bing the classics or reading a lot of lp novels or anything like that. I nerally just stuck with the comics. e never properly gained a love for ose text, and I think that's held me ck in a great way.

ndeniably talented and clearly iusiastic, Ross is nevertheless back by the limits of his imagi- on. His heroes—painted with enticing surfaces—cannot hide r hollowness. They exhibit, very ally, a comic-book conception of ianity: Ross's work, deriving al- t wholly as it does from the ium, is therefore hemmed in by And it is not that Ross is unaware he limitations of his creations, as e Siegel and Shuster of theirs; it iat he has, thus far, been unable ise above them.

Nothing, however, seems to be hold- back another superhero comic- k creator, Frank Miller. He is as ular as Alex Ross, though the ex- nity of his vision is unlikely to suit offee-table book. His graphic style iolent, unpredictable, innovative. copies nothing, he invents every- ng. For twenty-five years, he has n drawing and writing the best su- hero comics in the medium. His on the comic *Daredevil* for three rs beginning when he was twenty- is the finest in that hero's forty-year . His 450-page, two-volume Bat- n saga, *Dark Knight*, is satire, gedy, romance, and utopian trea- e. His stories, most recently *Sin City*, informed by the police procedur- and yet transcend their form. They funny, without being flimsy. His roes do not "look real," but they l human and, not infrequently, hor- ly inhumane. They are falling apart ysically, are borderline psychotic, eir psychoses produced by a com- tment to morality in immoral times. iller is looking beyond the borders of e world of comics and is not reas- red by what he sees. Nor is he trying reassure us. His stories are not suit- le for children. They entertain, il- minate, discomfort. They are com- books, in the best sense of the words. hey are alive. ■

# APPELLATION TEXAS CONTRÔLÉE

## The bloody history of the Lone Star State

### *By Benjamin Moser*

Discussed in this essay:

*Lone Star Nation: How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence—and Changed America*, by H. W. Brands. Doubleday, 2004. 592 pages. $29.95.

*Lone Star Rising: The Revolutionary Birth of the Texas Republic*, by William C. Davis. Free Press, 2004. 354 pages. $27.



*The Lone Star forever, the Lone Star forever*
*Oh, long may it flow over land and o'er sea . . .*

—Liberian national song

Texas cannot speak for itself. Like mold on a cheese, a thick crust of kitsch has grown up around it, and the result is more a series of stereotypes than a place. Texas must be dressed up and made presentable. The way the state is written about—irredeemably exotic, beyond serious civilized discussion—calls to mind a legendary Texan, that girl straight from the oil fields who arrived at Neiman's barefoot, wearing nothing but a mink coat. Texas is occasionally felt to be "important," but not important enough to stand on its own: discussion must be tied back to some generic experience such as "Enron" or "the current administration." When all else fails, there is always "America." "All Americans, not just Texans, remember the Alamo," reads the hopeful flap copy for William C. Davis's *Lone Star Rising*. H. W. Brands's *Lone Star Nation* is subtitled *How a Ragged Army of Volunteers Won the Battle for Texas Independence—and Changed America*. These formulations betray an anxiety—that the story of Texas is purely local news, that nobody out there in the rest of the country would otherwise care. They might, however, be made to care about "America."

Texas is part of the United States: on this subject there is wide agreement. That does not mean, however, that just any American can write about Texas. Aliens must pay the touchy indigenes proper respect. Official Texas received Robert Caro's *The Years of*

*Benjamin Moser is a writer living in the Netherlands.*

*e Last Stand at the Alamo*, by Newell C... ...ls / Private Collection/Bridgeman Art Library

from "New York City"—an untranslatable phrase, as used in Texas—could really understan[illegible] troversy dimmed with [illegible] volume until [illegible] Par[illegible] vived [illegible] Antonio [illegible] Board of Education attempted to ban an economics textbook that contained a single reference to Ferber. On the jacket of *The Super Americans*, by John Bainbridge, published in 1961, we learn that "to gather material for the present work, [Bainbridge] moved with his wife and two children to Texas and lived there for nine months, traveling extensively throughout the state and mingling constantly with the natives." Yet nothing lends authority like a real Texas pedigree. On the back of one edition of T. R. Fehrenbach's classic history, *Lone Star*, the book is described as "Big, Bold, and Brilliant—the True Texas Story as Only a Texan Can Tell It!" Michael Lind, in his recent *Made in Texas*, lays claim to authority with this arresting boast: "One of George W. Bush's White House aides, the son of a family friend, as a child wore hand-me-down clothes that I had outgrown."

Only a Texan Can Tell It—the formula ensures that Texas cannot speak for itself, only talk to itself. When it comes to writing works of Texas history, a Texan, these days, is anyone who hews to the general compact. These authors never challenge the basic triumphant narrative, taking just the right tone with the target audience of soccer dads in The Woodlands and Richardson and Alamo Heights who can be flattered with words like "Alexis de Tocqueville" and "dusty Mexican archives." Thus safely packaged, many books on Texas are not real investigations but soothing fairy tales. Since the audience already knows the ending, it can safely drift off to sleep.

Publishers, who likewise tend not to over-esteem the Texan intellect, reduce the subject of Texas history to another sizzling press release, a great Father's Day gift, "something we can

[illegible] *America* fits rhetorically beside *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*; or [illegible] Texas, it seems, is just another neglected staple.

*Lone Star Nation* and Davis's *Lone Star Rising*, two new books about early Texas, contain very little new information and many mistakes of fact and emphasis. They make no serious attempt to place the story of the successful rebellion of Anglo-Texas into the broader nineteenth-century context that alone gives it resonance. Brands and Davis leave Texas firmly in "America," a standard chapter in the unfolding story of "manifest destiny" and "democracy," something foreordained and inevitable. Yet the most remarkable thing about Texas was precisely its improbability.

Texas resisted European settlement more fiercely than any other part of the Americas; even Patagonia was conquered before Texas became wholly safe for white settlement. The Comanches, who dominated the Texas plains, were the most warlike Indians in North America. They, a dearth of precious metals, and the Chihuahua desert protected Texas from the mainstream of Hispanic settlement, though the Spanish tried for generations to convert the Indians and stimulate settlement around their missions. Texas was isolated from Anglo-America by vast swaths of unoccupied lands west of the Appalachians. The Texas historian Fehrenbach writes: "When the Peace of Paris was signed in 1783, most men thought it would require another thousand years for Anglo-America to fill the region between the Appalachians and the Mississippi."

That it did not, that the continent was so quickly conquered, is a wonder; but rather than seeking to explain this extraordinary phenomenon, Brands and Davis present it as a foregone conclusion. "Geology and climate had shaped the region of Texas . . . almost as if they had human settlement in mind," writes Brands—not only unwittingly personifying "geology" and "climate" but shedding little light on what distinguishes Texas fr[illegible] say, Sweden, or KwaZulu-Natal. L[illegible] er on, adds Davis, "Texas was th[illegible] for the taking. Logic, the [Louisia[illegible] Purchase, geography even, all seem[illegible] to dictate that even if Texas was [illegible] part of the United States, it should [illegible] and if not that, then still it ought to [illegible] free and independent of its Iber[illegible] masters." Who ought to be free, and [illegible] what? In the period he is discussing—[illegible] 1806 to 1807—the entire non-Indi[illegible] population of Texas was around 7,0[illegible] the first American baby would not [illegible] born in Texas until 1821. "Logic" w[illegible] not on the side of an American Tex[illegible] Texas was the end of the world. [illegible] rather, of two different worlds, t[illegible] great empires, one reaching its zeni[illegible] where the other touched its nadir.

The details of the story of ear[illegible] Texas are very well known; indee[illegible] few episodes in American history ha[illegible] been as painstakingly belabored. [illegible] historian writing today cannot be co[illegible] tent simply to go over, once agai[illegible] the same old set of facts. The ch[illegible] lenge is to discover the meaning [illegible] those facts. Is there anything new [illegible] say about the Texas Revolution? [illegible] course. But in order to do so a hist[illegible] rian must have a clear understandi[illegible] of why Texas is significant. Th[illegible] means having a clear understanding [illegible] two epic phenomena, the rise of t[illegible] United States and the decline of Spa[illegible] ish America. Both subjects are equa[illegible] ly important and equally vast, whic[illegible] makes writing on early Texas unus[illegible] ally challenging. Yet understandi[illegible] these processes is the bare minimu[illegible] Happily for many writers, Texas hi[illegible] tory is not a serious subject, and so i[illegible] norance of Spanish-American cultu[illegible] is not a disqualifying handicap.

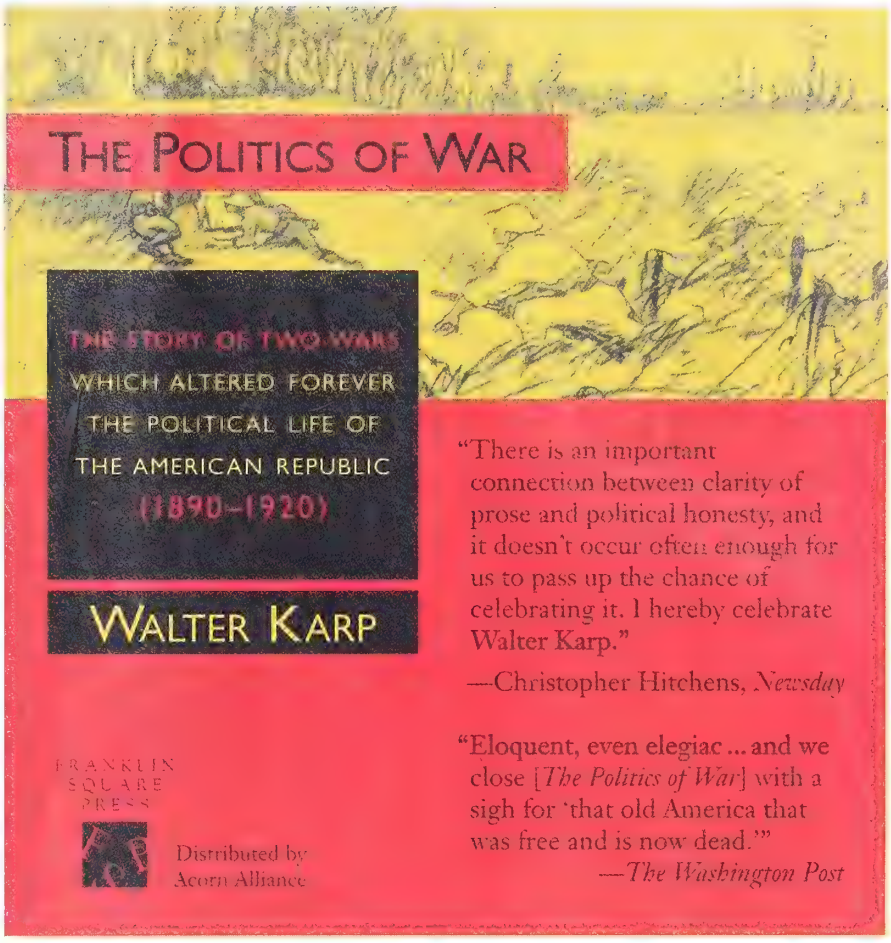
William C. Davis is an outstandi[illegible] example of the amateur historian [illegible] Texas. He tells us, for instance, th[illegible] the New World capital of the Spa[illegible] ish-American Empire was Havana. (A[illegible] though there was no single capita[illegible] Lima and Mexico City were the cap[illegible] tals of the original viceroyalties.) Dav[illegible] misspells the name of President Ana[illegible] tasio Bustamante of Mexico as "Bust[illegible] mente." He italicizes the word "cr[illegible] ole," as if it were Spanish, and opposes it to the *peninsulares*—Spaniards bor[illegible] in Iberia—and furthermore believe[illegible] the singular of this word to be *peninsu[illegible]*

He refers to Americans as *ameri*—a term that in early nineteenth-ry Latin America referred to s of Spanish heritage born in the World. He papers over these la- with ostentatiously italicized maid Spanish: "*Tejanos* were ei- *icos* or *pobres*, rich or poor." He , "After the loss of Canada in the f 1756–1763, however, France y gave up on the New World ex- or a few islands in the Caribbean." of those few islands was the sug- ntation of Saint-Domingue, the profitable colony in the world; 'largely gave up" is an unusual o describe the French reaction e Haitian Revolution, a twelve- long holocaust in which 350,000 le died. To claim that this event hope to restive elements in New " approaches insanity. In New —as in Venezuela, as in South olina—the reaction of native es, who feared their own slaves d rise, was hysterical.

avis interprets the history of his country just as eccentrically. He s, for example, that "the North rican colonies had the hidden ben- f not being surfeited with fabu- mineral riches, at first a disap- tment to colonists and mother try alike." But colonial historians imously record that the Puritans, xile in Leiden, decided against na because that country was sup- d to contain gold, which would pt and curse weak members of the munity. "Suddenly people whose lies may have spent five hundred s tilling the same patch of land d see just beyond the sunset whole worlds awaiting plow and axe and munity," he writes of seventeenth- tury English immigrants. Davis has aps overlooked the well-publicized arch of historians like Bernard Bai- and E. E. Rich, who estimated that y 16 percent of families in Eliza- an England had remained in the e village as long as a century—an eme mobility that goes a long way ard explaining how the West was ulated as quickly as it was.

Brands's lively and readable book tains vivid portraits of the famous tagonists of the Texas Revolution, this focus on individuals, especial- n those already so well known, blurs






SOLUTION TO THE JULY PUZZLE

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NOTES FOR "CRAZY QUILT":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 1. ons*-laugh-(Pa)t(er); 11. consumption, two mngs.; 12. (b)eagle-(pheasan)t; 13. ca.-wing; 14. Ol(i)via*; 15. m(e)anly; 16. moon(light)ing; 18. ma(g[arden])ma; 20. (f)airy; 23. Cyrils*; 24. glassblowing*; 28. emph*-A-size; 29. Is-s(E)i(rev.); 30. REO-pen; 31. macaroni*.

DOWN: 1. oce(a)nography*; 2. no(NC)om(rev.); 3. snow-Mobilers; 4. s-(limn)-ess*; 5. two mngs.; 6. p-egging; 7. Tah(rev.)-it-I; 8. lo-vin(g)ly; 9. enigma*; 10. tra(i)ns-mission; 14. ogle, hidden; 17. bag-m-en; 18. myopic*; 19. skinny, pun; 21. s(EP)oy; 22. bream*; 25. an-SA; 26. a-zil(lion), rev.; 27. e.g.-I's.

talents to dig a little more deeply into the [illegible]. Brands's [illegible] a cheesy paean to "democracy," whose "one saving grace" is that it "sooner or later, sometimes after terrible [illegible] corrected its worst mistakes." One du[illegible] land . . . was what made democracy possible and America different from Eu[illegible]. Texas revolutionists, he writes indulgently: "It was an oxy[illegible] one that indeed made its own decisions"—another way of saying "a mob." "Democracy won in the end, as the American people secured popular government against the forces of particularism and disunion," he writes, rather startlingly, of the defeat of Texas in the Civil War. Whatever one might think about Texas's decision to secede from the Union, one cannot say that it was not "democratic." Popular government and disunion can, after all, go hand in hand. But like so many of his colleagues, Brands is less concerned with a rigorous evaluation of the historical record than with buttering up the natives, reinforcing the old American conviction, nowhere more deeply held than in Texas, that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds.

Lamentably, Brands is not alone in forcing Texas history into such tedious teleologies. "Democracy" triumphs in Brands's work, but "manifest destiny" is where it's all heading in Davis's. Davis believes the annexation of Texas to the United States to have been inexorable, and he uses even random episodes to drive this narrative. Of a filibustering expedition in 1812—nine years before the first American baby was born in the state, remember—he writes: "It seemed nothing could halt the march toward an independent Texas." The Adams-Onís treaty of 1819, which set the southwestern boundary of the United States at the Sabine River, "scotched those dreams [of an independent Texas] and virtually forced Texian settlers to take action in order one day to become Americans in title as well as heritage." Who these Texian settlers were is not explained: in 1826, four years *after* the foundation of the Austin colony, there were around 1,300 English-speaking whites [illegible]. These immigrants were hardly likely to tug their forelocks meekly [illegible] by military authority," Davis writes. This picture of despotism hardly squares with his assertion a few pages later that "Mexican *soldados* were few and confined mainly to the *presidios* at Béxar and Goliad." "Ruling a province at so great a remove from the central authority" was a "near impossibility." The result: "Inevitably Texas one day became a part of the United States."

"The land is good: it only wants men to possess it," one man wrote from the new colony in 1820. "Nature is constantly pouring out her treasures into the laps of the industrious," reported another. The settlement was "a plant planted by the Great Husbandman of the Universe," an "emporium of American empire." One reverend hoped that the "Lone Star may become a mighty constellation like our own."

This buoyant emporium—Liberia—was founded in 1821, months before Austin's first settlers arrived in Texas. Now, when seen as anything besides a pathetic humanitarian catastrophe, Liberia is understood as a slight cacophonous twang in the swelling symphony of American history. But the expansion and success of one Lone Star republic was no more a foregone conclusion than the failure of the other. At the time of its founding, Liberia occupied a more central place in the American imagination than did Texas, for it promised not only to create a new empire but to offer a viable solution to the race issue then coming to dominate American politics—a problem Texas would later exacerbate.

In the early nineteenth century, many places provided more attractive targets for American expansion than a distant Texas swarming with Comanches. Canada was an obvious possibility, and the War of 1812 was in part fought to drive the British out of a neighboring Anglo-French country—rather like Louisiana. The movement died hard: there was serious talk of annexing Canada as late as the Hayes Administration, ten years *after* Canada's 1867 Confederation. "Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain [illegible] incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from its [illegible]som," said John Quincy Adams in 1823. This was not simply an imperialist ploy: until the Civil War, there was an active pro-annexation party in Cuba; and after the Spanish-American War the United States did occupy Cuba. When gold was discovered in California, many aimed to conquer Central America to secure the isthmian passage. Why should the annexation of Texas have been any more foreordained than the annexation of, say, the Philippines, British Columbia, Panama, or Nicaragua? Only in hindsight does it seem "logical" that Texas—and Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands—should be part of the United States.

Anything was possible in the nineteenth century. Most of the world's borders now seem set, guaranteed by treaties and armies and seats in the United Nations, but such was not the case a hundred and fifty years ago. Two hundred years ago, few would have dreamed that the Spanish Empire might fall apart as catastrophically as it did. In 1800 it was, if anything, distinguished by its durability and stability. Ten years later the subcontinent fell into a cycle of poverty and violence from which it has yet to emerge. Since Colombian independence, the nation's government has controlled the entire national territory for a total of only five years. In Venezuela, between January 1, 1830, and December 31, 1903, there were 39 revolutions and 13 armed uprisings: one author estimates that "throughout these seventy-four years, fighting was occurring somewhere in Venezuela one out of every three days." Ecuador, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Argentina all spent most of the century in some form of civil war.

The turmoil of Mexico that set the stage for Texas independence was therefore unexceptional. After Hidalgo's Cry of Dolores, in 1810, Mexico spent over a century consolidating its republican institutions. Between 1821 and 1847, the country had fifty governments, eleven headed by Santa Anna. Brands glides over this Spanish background, ignoring or simplifying

rcumstances of Mexican inde-
nce. The result is to play up the
News angle, removing the sto-
Texas from its proper context
lacing most of the weight of the
a on the shoulders of Santa
. The Mexican president comes
an operetta dictator, a pompous
of fun, rather than as the per-
cation of a great continental
ly: the incapacity of the creole
who first rose against Spain to
n the new republics.
ch was the extent of the ruin that
ecession of Texas seems less re-
able than the fact that so much of
co survived intact. In 1823, Cen-
merica, part of Iturbide's Mexi-
mpire, successfully rebelled, frag-
ting into five microstates—
emala, El Salvador, Nicaragua,
duras, and Costa Rica. Tampico
led in 1832. Professing dissatis-
on with the centralist constitu-
Texas seceded in 1836, and Yu-
n followed in 1837. Tabasco
ured its independence in 1843.
this context, the massacres at
ad and the Alamo, rather than
mples of imperial arrogance, can
en as the desperate attempts of a
less government to assert control
a disintegrating country: a mes-
to other rebels elsewhere in Mex-
But the Texas Revolution was dif-
nt, not so much for its causes as
ts consequences.

What Anglo-Texans eventually came to constitute their own republic—and that that republ- was joined to the United States, that Texas ultimately remained in Union—seems, even in retrospect, er surprising. The Americo-Liberi- having no experience but that of plantation South, imagined liber- s a simple release from work. They dled in a few coastal settlements, ying themselves with their Mason- dges as their colony sunk into ever per disarray. Texans were exactly opposite, so decidedly not joiners t their settlement was almost med from the beginning. Like all tern pioneers, they were radically -reliant and could work together y with great difficulty. Stephen stin was tormented by undiplomat- ndividuals who insisted on speaking




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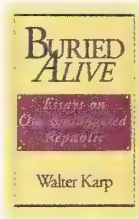
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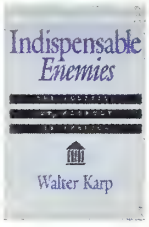


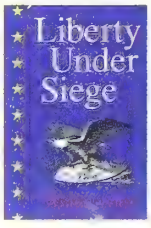

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San Jacinto in 1836.

[illegible] before the fighting broke out, and he [illegible] the freshest off the boat. The haphazard Texan army [illegible] a much larger and better-equipped Mexican force. In the end, the Texans had certain advantages that were to dishearten the Mexicans: mostly unhappy draftees; the Texans were also veterans of the frontier, and, as such, extraordinarily belligerent and excellent guerrilla fighters. Yet the war was decided by chance: at San Jacinto, the Texans surprised the napping Mexicans, mowed them down, and imprisoned the vainglorious Santa Anna, ensuring, shakily, Texas independence. It is an astonishing story of triumph over unbelievable odds, one that has understandably attracted many writers. The near-misses and what-if's, the lucky escapes and the heartrending massacres; the "colorful" characters like Sam Houston, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, and Santa Anna; the thrilling tales of the Alamo and San Jacinto—all give the Texas Revolution a made-for-TV glamour. After San Jacinto, a battle that left a hundred times more Mexicans than Texans dead, Texas appeared destined for future glory. It wasn't quite that easy, but few writers have been interested in examining the sadder, darker, and less alluring struggles that followed. By murmuring the magical incantations—"democracy," "manifest destiny"—Davis and Brands gloss over the sacrifice and desperation that is the real mark of Texas history.

Weighed down by debt, besieged by Indians and Mexicans, independent Texas governments immediately began trying to shed their unwanted independence. For almost a decade, Washington waffled as Texas took its present form—as an issue, an idea, a "question," more than an actual place. Those against annexation argued that by ad-

[illegible] interest in checkmating [illegible]. Indeed, but for determined southern conniving, Texas seemed destined to become a North American Uruguay, a British protectorate [illegible] two regional powers. Andrew Jackson, who was fervently pro-Texas and an old friend of Houston, [illegible] Texas [illegible] parliamentary [illegible] during the early his term. The equally pro-Texas John Tyler, almost eight years later, was forced by determined opposition to postpone crucial decisions on Texas until the very end of *his* term. Under James K. Polk, in 1845, Texas finally joined the Union. By then, the question had inflamed the sectional controversy, with [illegible] suspicion.

The annexation of Texas in 1845 and the Mexican War that almost immediately followed marked a sea change in American foreign relations. When the Monroe Doctrine was propagated in 1823—less than a decade after the British had burned the White House, and a time when Spain still had busy designs on the Americas—both Americans and their newly independent neighbors saw it as a defensive measure, and an ineffective one at that. In his 1845 message to Congress, Polk said: "It is well known to the American people and to all nations that this government has never interfered with the relations subsisting between other governments. We have never made ourselves parties to their wars or their alliances; we have not sought their territories by conquest; we have not mingled with parties in their domestic struggles; and believing our own form of government to be the best, we have never attempted to propagate it by intrigues, by diplomacy, or by force." This was generally true, at least until Polk's own administration. The federal government was committed to expansion through

[illegible]eful means, and had [illegible] [illegible] including [illegible] in 1803 and Florida in 1819. Bu[illegible] til the annexation of Texas [illegible] war with Mexico, it had never [illegible] quered territory from foreign pow[illegible]

With the conquest of such an e[illegible] [illegible] part of Mexico, America[illegible] tentions became suspect throug[illegible] the hemisphere. In taking territory [illegible] neighbors by force, the United S[illegible] was only doing what the new L[illegible] American states had done ever s[illegible] the dissolution of the Spanish Emp[illegible] But the United States had not ope[illegible] ed like that. Texas was settled by Am[illegible] icans not because of official gov[illegible] ment policy but because priv[illegible] individuals decided to move there. [illegible] sisted by private companies. This [illegible] the pattern of American settlem[illegible] since its beginnings in Massachus[illegible] and Virginia: the people moving [illegible] first, the metropolitan government [illegible] luctantly following. This was what h[illegible] pened in Kentucky and Tennessee [illegible] the eighteenth century, and this [illegible] what happened in Texas, and Libe[illegible] in the nineteenth. With the Mexic[illegible] War, the United States moved fr[illegible] individual to national imperialism.

Even after the conquest of t[illegible] Southwest, the unity of the Unit[illegible] States and the continuance of Texas [illegible] the Union were not guaranteed. S[illegible] teen years after Texas joined the Un[illegible] ed States, in 1845, it left again. In [illegible] famous speech protesting secessi[illegible] Houston said: "Here is a constituti[illegible] al party that intends to violate the c[illegible] stitution because a man is constit[illegible] tionally elected president. If the peop[illegible] constitutionally elect a president, [illegible] the minority to resist him? Do they i[illegible] tend to carry that principle into th[illegible] new Southern Confederacy? If they c[illegible] we can readily perceive how long [illegible] will last." Had the South won, the Co[illegible] federates would likely have splintere[illegible] Houston was right: a couple of yea[illegible] after secession from the United State[illegible] Texas was again mulling secession, th[illegible] time from the Confederate States.

The Texas Revolution was [illegible] chaotic event. There were de[illegible] larations for one general an[illegible] against another. People fought to th[illegible]

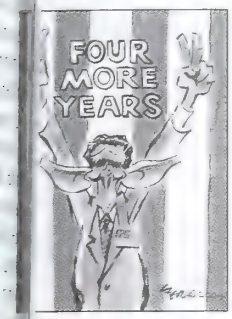
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Continued from page 88

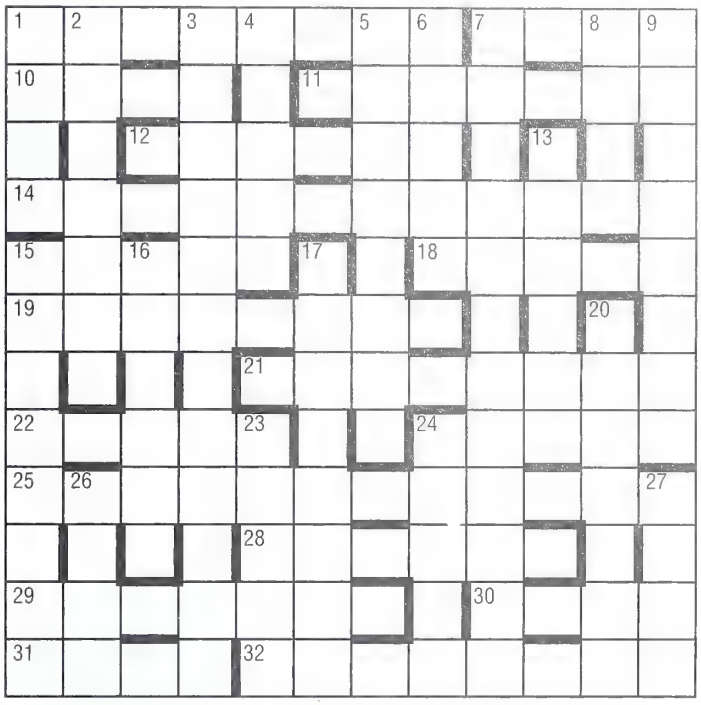

death in favor of one constitutio[n] against another. There were sece[ssion] and interim presidents and mani[festo] and mutinies and massacres. Po[lk] questions that in more stable soc[ieties] could have been solved by cons[ensus] were ultimately decided by guns. Texas Revolution was, in other w[ords] Latin American. Texas's Latin A[merica]can trajectory continued long [after] San Jacinto, however. Its ninetee[nth] century history records an appa[lling] succession of disasters.

Consider the following. Thir[teen] years after the first Anglo-Ame[rican] settlers arrived, in 1822, the Texas [Rev]olution began. Hundreds were k[illed] and most of the economy wa[s] stroyed. After independence, in 1[836] there were six years of almost co[n]ual warfare, culminating in 1842, w[hen] Mexico twice occupied San Anto[nio]. Texas joined the Union in 1845 [be]ginning the Mexican War. In [1861] came the great calamity of the [Civil] War: a quarter of the state's men [were] killed or incapacitated; the econ[omy] once again, was destroyed (in 186[0] assessed value of all slaves was 20 [per] cent more than the assessed value [of] cultivated lands). Land values fell b[y] percent; the western frontier retre[ated] by between fifty and two hundred m[iles] and the state came under a corrupt [mil]itary dictatorship, from 1865 to 1[870]. Until the beginning of the 1880s, t[here] were fierce Indian wars. From 188[0] 1890, due to pressure from barbed [wire] and railroads, the Texas cattle indu[stry] was destroyed. From the 1870s to [the] 1890s, half of the state's farmers w[ere] reduced to peonage. In 1900 on[ly] the largest cities in the state, Galves[ton] was obliterated by a hurricane. I h[ave] not mentioned the price paid by I[ndi]ans or Africans or Mexicans.

That this is a history upon whic[h] is difficult to impose a triumphalist n[ar]rative does not occur to many writ[ers]. The land was won with blood in c[on]ditions of unimaginable adversity. S[ix]*teen people died* for every mile of Texas plains that was conquered. [To] make that conquest seem inevita[ble] or obvious is to betray the memory [of] the heroes of Texas. The only possi[ble] mode is the tragic.

# Foursomes

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*
*(with acknowledgments to E. R. Galli)*



The bar pattern in this puzzle has four-way symmetry; that is, the pattern remains the same no matter which side is up. The clues to the four entries sharing symmetrical placement have been grouped together as foursomes. Within each group, however, they are listed randomly. The solver will have to determine their correct location.

Clue answers include three proper names. 2D is not in all dictionaries. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 85.

CLUES

1A, 32A, 9D, 15D (8)
- Trips over SYSY500/0?
- Emotional *ER* character and all the doctors it turned around
- Had a beef jerky, etc. after blowing job with newsman
- Soaks to start sanitizing stains

7A, 31A, 1D, 27D (4)
- One singing extremely melancholy sounds
- Tom Thumb's final resting place
- Poses "Is it so? Out of bounds?"
- Small change in announced track

10A, 30A, 8D, 26D (4)
- Private officer given shiny coat
- French writer denied promotion is put out
- Chance will produce fortitude after a bit of pressure
- Fillet produces this vitamin!

11A, 29A, 2D, 20D (7)
- Uncertain her education's core was naturally there
- However hydrogen check comes back, it's usually the next thing to sink
- Tour too complicated to eradicate
- Miniature contains nothing like the way a rhythm band plays

12A, 28A, 13D, 16D (6)
- Echoer rattled hold
- Brandy makes good music that's contemporary and pop
- Trick Parisian and neck
- Sticking around one breather after initially gasping

14A, 25A, 3D, 7D (12)
- "A live tree" leads to one answer, for starters
- Athlete's specialty in resort: basket weaving
- Deficiencies revealed when Curt, a poet, is read aloud
- Reportedly, no gay sailor meets an alien with restraint

15A, 24A, 6D, 23D (5)
- Correct date to go after—so be it!
- One in fifty, say
- Black Knight in chess, for example, or otherwise
- Before Ecstasy, I'd go off and kind of stray

18A, 22A, 4D, 24D (5)
- *The Strange One*, about moral value
- Raise broken sign
- International Imports, home of retro fashion source
- Voice to throw from stage

19A, 21A, 5D, 17D (8)
- Clearheaded, shot duel and died
- Old bartenders' funeral music disturbed rest
- Repeated behavior not allowed in breaking reservation
- Woman in major run takes heart from skiers

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Foursomes," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by August 13. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the October issue. Winners of the June puzzle, "Crazy Quilt," are Donald W. Carney, S. Greensburg, Pennsylvania; Karl Gottesman, Chestertown, Maryland; and Michael Kohut, Prince George, British Columbia.



# FINDINGS

Researchers at Emory University announced that they had used gene therapy to create high levels of vasopressin receptors in the ventral forebrains of promiscuous male meadow voles, and that within days the voles settled down into nice monogamous relationships, just like their cousins the prairie voles, which naturally have high numbers of vasopressin receptors and mate for life. Monkeys exhibit similar behavior patterns and brain chemistry, though experts warned that a cure for human promiscuity was unlikely. American researchers found that giving aspirin and other pain relievers to infant rats adversely affects their libido later in life. A Zambian man committed suicide after his wife caught him raping a chicken. Scientists concluded that men are less sensitive than women, and that testosterone is to blame. A reproductive epidemiologist in North Carolina said that women are more likely to have sex when they're fertile, and a clinical trial in Pittsburgh suggested that bone marrow stem cell therapy might heal broken hearts.

The Pentagon denied that a new "non-lethal" ray gun that fires millimeter-wave electromagnetic energy, which penetrates the skin and instantly heats water molecules to 130 degrees (and leaves no marks), might be used as a torture device. No one has been able to stand the pain caused by the weapon, known as the "Active Denial System," for more than three seconds. New research found that people are often unable to remember details about traumatic events. Microsoft patented the "double-click," and African clawed frogs were invading San Francisco. American doctors acknowledged that they have been practicing face transplants on dead bodies. A German ornithologist discovered that urban nightingales, forced to compete with noise pollution, can sing so loudly that they break the law. The loudest recorded was 95 decibels, which is about as loud as a chain saw. Thousands of Congolese Pygmies were suffering from a flesh-eating disease called bush yaws. World-grain carryover stocks were at a thirty-year low, well below the seventy-day consumption level that is considered the minimum for basic food security, and Haitian farmers have been reduced to eating the seed that they should be planting. Other Haitians were eating biscuits made out of butter, salt, water, and dirt. Fifteen Chinese warehouse workers were crushed to death by an avalanche of garlic.

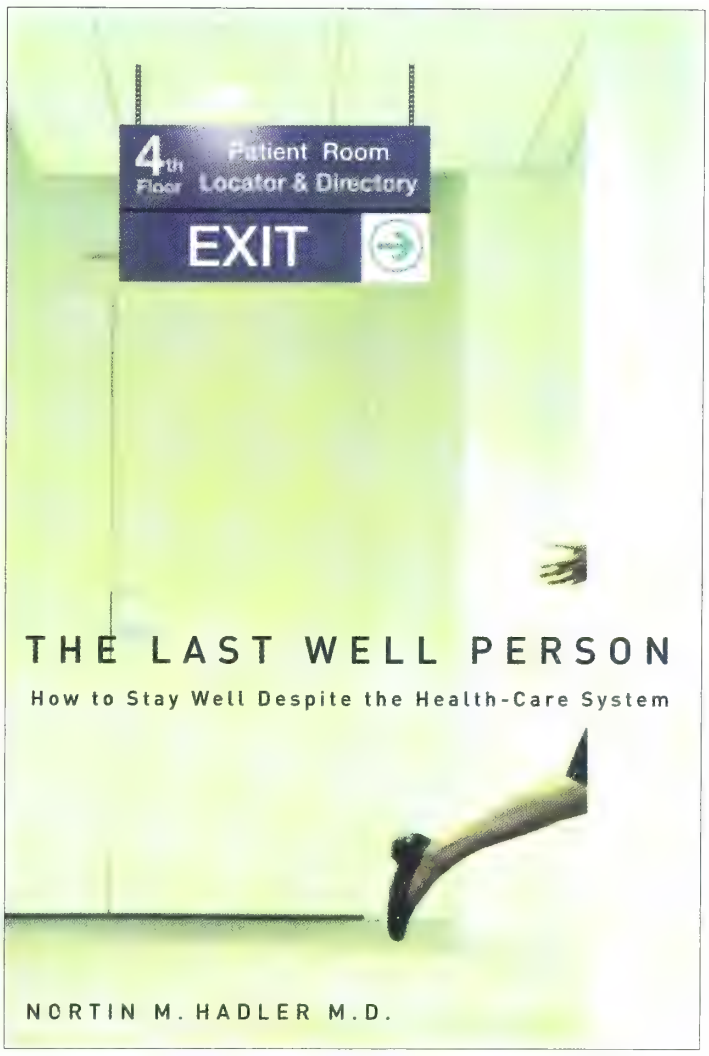
Canadian researchers found that breathing air polluted with soot particles causes genetic damage in mice. Researchers at Harvard's School of Public Health found that the increase in diabetes over the last several decades coincides with increases in the use of corn syrup in processed foods, and it was suggested that consumption of carbonated soft drinks could be responsible for the rise in throat cancer. A researcher at the University of Michigan found strong evidence that the large increase in asthma and allergies over the last twenty years has been caused by antibiotics. British investigators, who studied samples of human biopsies, estimated that almost 4,000 Britons could have mad cow disease prions in their tonsils. An EPA study found that household "air fresheners" could be causing a carcinogenic smog in people's homes. NASA astrophysicists said that measurements of X-rays from twenty-six galaxy clusters confirmed that dark energy, a kind of mysterious repulsive gravity, dominates the universe, though scientists participating in the "Cryogenic Dark Matter Search II" admitted that even their most sensitive experiments had failed to detect a single dark-matter particle. New research on nuclear fusion suggested that the universe is older than previously thought, and an astronomer in Virginia reconstructed the sound made by the Big Bang and concluded that it began in silence, then rose to a "majestic" major third before diminishing, over the course of a million years, into a more melancholy minor third. ■

*"Broadmeadow Brook-Donald and the Sirens, 8-21-03," a polaroid montage by John O'Reilly.*
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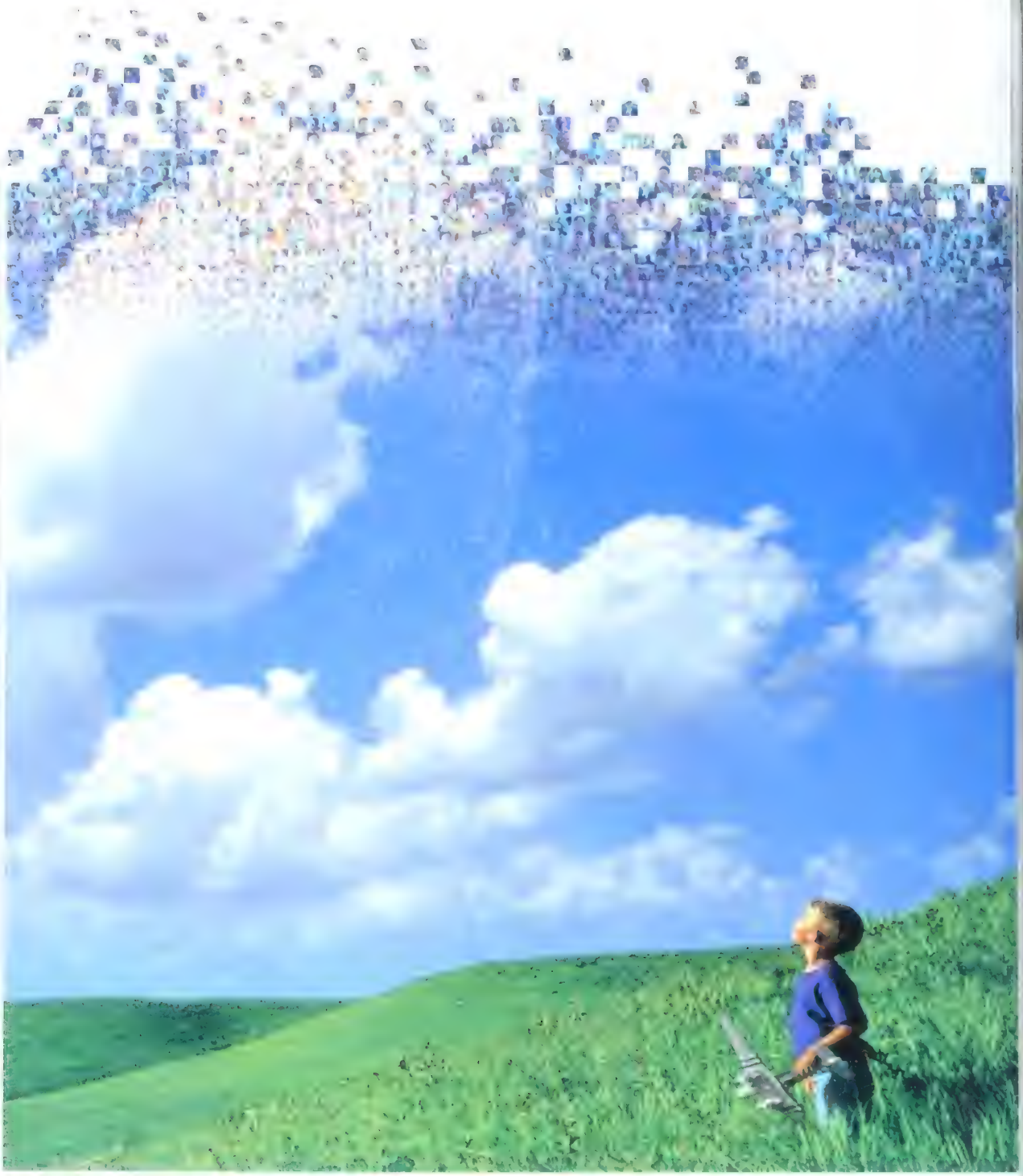
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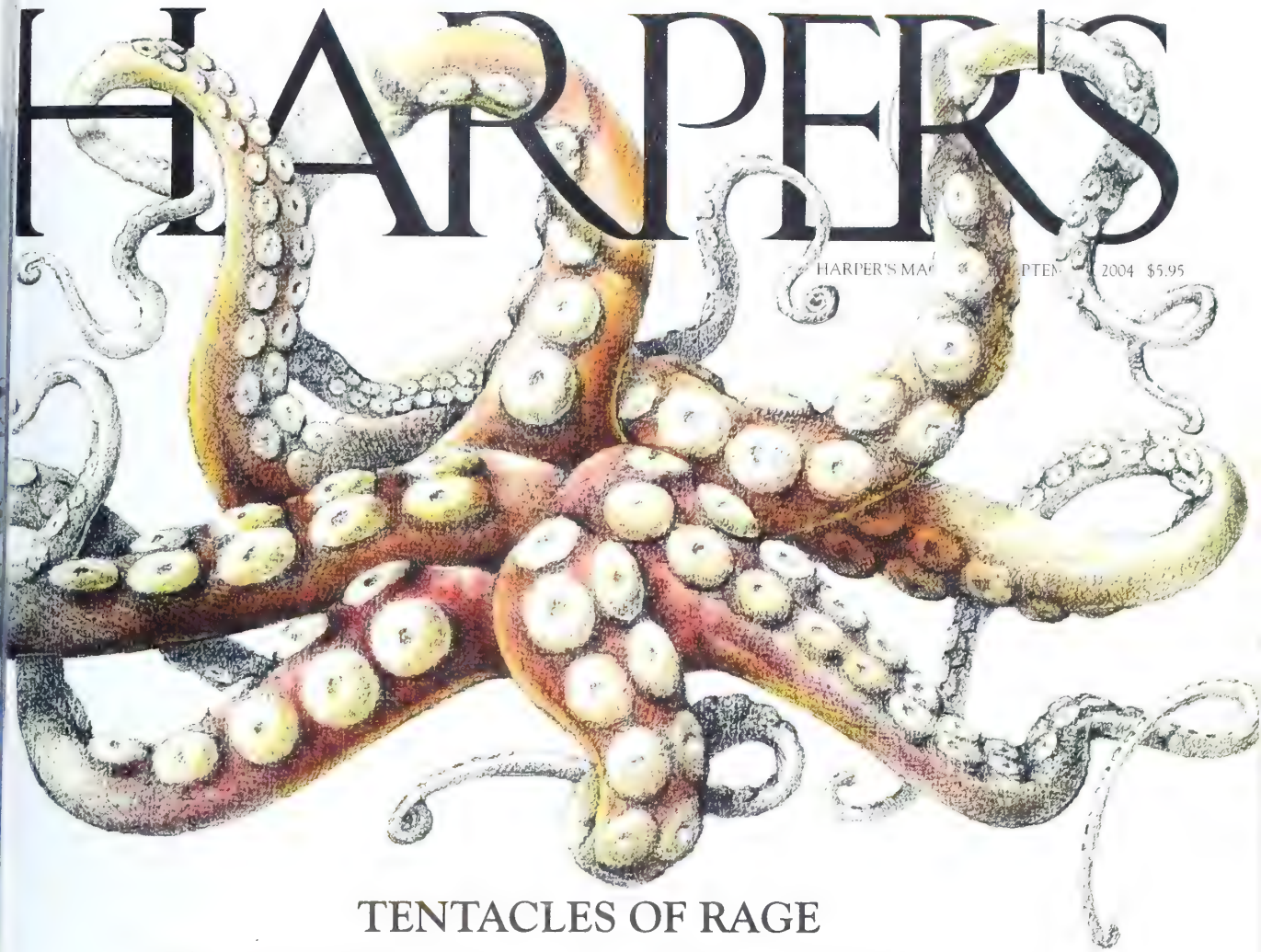
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*Cover by Dugald Stermer*


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# LETTERS

## The Gospel According to Mel

I agree with Francine Prose that, artistically, Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* is a very flawed movie, but, unlike Prose, I believe that instead of promoting theocracy, the film actually reminds us of the proper relationship between church and state ["Invitation to a Crucifixion," Reviews, June].

*The Passion of the Christ* portrays Caiaphas and the other Jewish priests, unrelentingly, as smug and scheming one-note villains, missing only thick, black mustaches to twirl. In their single-minded pursuit of Jesus, they rest their case before Pontius Pilate entirely on the charge of heresy. The priests are "bloodthirsty," not because they are Jews but because such stifling of dissent is the very nature of theocracy. This is no different from the Athens that killed Socrates, Christianity's Inquisition, or many of the Muslim countries in the Middle East today.

The resolution to this theological-political problem was finally achieved through the founding of America, which established a regime based on the rational moral laws of nature and God, including every citizen's right to freedom in his or her religious beliefs.

*John Kienker*
Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

Many of the conclusions Francine Prose draws from Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* are from a substantive misunderstanding of what the film strives to be. Gibson does not attempt to emulate his predecessors Pier Paolo Pasolini (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*) and Martin Scorsese (*The Last Temptation of Christ*), who relied on narrative-driven cinema. *The Passion of the Christ*'s form is more akin to that of devotional icon painting.

Icon painting, and specifically renderings of Christ, aimed to illustrate a single truth through an image—or images—that promulgated Christian doctrine and inspired devotion among believers. Icons of Christ presented a particular challenge since Christian doctrine speaks of Christ as an infinite being, God *and* human. The impossibility of depicting such a state inspired these artists to depict a single truth about Him; i.e., Christ as Healer, Christ as Redeemer, Christ as King, or Christ as Sufferer. In this sense, Gibson's relatively narrative-less and graphic film offers up an entirely new discussion, feasibly placing itself beside the fourteenth-century altar paintings a

*Harper's Magazine welcomes reader response. Please address mail to Letters, Harper's Magazine, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012, or email us at letters@harpers.org. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

Getty Museum. Whether or not ucceeds on this aesthetic level is debatable, but the standards for film's judgment have changed irely. The more interesting dis-sion relates to the translation of at has been an exclusively paint-tradition into celluloid.

*neron Stallones*
Angeles

Francine Prose's assertions regard-*The Passion of the Christ*'s social ects are drawn with the same ad strokes that she deplores in "fundamentalist" targets. Her at-pt to portray a monolithic, right-ng, Christian bloc with the dual ns of encouraging support for the q war and stoking anti-Semitism sits some very strange connec-ns: Gibson, member of a schis-tic Latin-rite sect that considers current pope a fraud; the Roman tholic Church, whose spiritual ad has denounced the U.S. inva-n of Iraq; and the staunchly Protestant Christian right that supports President Bush and has an abiding distrust of all things Catholic. Although these groups may sometimes share enemies, they are hardly capable of the society-wide manipulation Prose suggests.

*Mark Carr*
Washington, D.C.

Francine Prose brilliantly juxtaposes Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* with Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. What she fails to mention is that both Pasolini and Gibson chose Matera, in southern Italy, as their films' backdrop, since the small town seemed more in keeping with the collective perception of the biblical world than modern-day Israel. Matera is also near Lucania, where the writer Carlo Levi was banished to *confino* or domestic exile in 1935 by Mussolini's Fascist regime. There, the townsfolk used to say that "Christ never arrived. Christ stopped at Eboli."

A more pointed irony is that Pasolini's *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, surely the most powerful religious film ever made, was crafted by a homosexual, communist atheist.

*Stanislao G. Pugliese*
Woodmere, N.Y.

Francine Prose writes that discussion relating to *The Passion of the Christ* "has mostly been about the past, when in fact we should be talking, and worrying, about the future." The future is no doubt of grave concern, but in her efforts to direct our attention to tomorrow and beyond, Prose underestimates the future's relationship to the past. By disallowing any rational challenges to our prejudiced reading of the past (the Gospels included) there will continue to be abuse of power in the future. We will not achieve a just future until we stop our unjust retelling of the past.

*Leon Zitzer*
New York City


Joni Mitchell
The Beginning Of Survival



destiny is a mystery to us. What will happen when the buffalo are all slaughtered?
d horses tamed? What will happen when the secret corners of the forest are heavy with
t of many men and the ripe hills are blotted by talking wires? Where will the thicket be?
Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is it to say good-bye to the swift pony and hunt?
l of the living and **the beginning of survival**..."

— *CHIEF SEATTLE'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT (mid-1800s)*

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James Schlesinger, *former secretary of defense and former director of the CIA*

*Hitz's list of the top 10 espionage novels of all time is at aaknopf.com*

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## The Rust of Empire

Luke Mitchell writes that "as in the case of the Vietnam War, it is decreasingly clear what it was meant to achieve" ["Blood for Oil," Briefings, July]. Perhaps a recap of recent events is required.

The reasons for the Bush Administration's decision to invade Iraq and oust Saddam Hussein included the removal of the weapons of mass destruction that were thought to exist, and the suppression of the long-term threat to Israel posed by Saddam's regime. It was believed that the invasion would be easier to achieve in the wake of September 11. For obvious reasons, public acknowledgment of the administration's motivations relating to Iraq's oil resources would not have aided the cause.

There were, in fact, two potent reasons for seeking Saddam's overthrow that did concern oil. The first was to render U.N. sanctions against Iraq unnecessary, since they were becoming ineffective, costly, and were increasingly arousing opposition among America's allies. After nearly a decade, the public began to regard the sanctions as inflicting a severe hardship on ordinary Iraqi civilians for the sins of their leader.

The second reason was to facilitate the development of Iraq's vast oil resources as a counterweight to the dangerously growing dependence on Saudi oil.

These are not dishonorable goals. But the armed pursuit and the invasion of Iraq, against advice from many experienced and eminent sources at the cost of thousands of Iraqi lives and hundreds of American soldiers, as well as $200 billion of U.S. taxpayers' money, was folly beyond redemption.

*Francisco Parra*
Author, *Oil Politics: A Modern History of Petroleum*
East Orleans, Mass.

## The Landscape Listens

Edward Hoagland's effulgent and nostalgic memory of a creek, a pond, and boyhood resonates among many of my colleagues—anthropologists, naturalists, observers—all in th[e] sixties and seventies who remem[ber] childhoods tinged with unfette[red] exploration; with local opportu[nities] ties to observe, wonder, and l[earn] daily, carrying questions home [to] the dinner table: "Why do mass[ive] flocks of blackbirds hover, swi[rl] change course after hours of flig[ht] and finally settle?" "Why did t[he] muskrat chew off his leg to free hi[m]self from my trap?" "Why do coyo[tes] eat my cats?" ["Small Silences," J[u]lio, July].

Thank you for including [the] Walden Pond update. Hoagland's [es]say links together what we lucky [few] people knew before this country w[as] overrun with freeways, billboar[ds] and land developers.

*Dick Jones*
San Diego, Calif.

Edward Hoagland highlights t[he] genetic similarity between apes' a[nd] humans' genomes to illustrate t[he] significance of apes in "Small S[i]lences." Although often cited at [98] percent, recent studies indicate th[at] the amount of shared genetic data [is] actually less than 95 percent. Oth[er] studies have indicated that the g[e]netic similarity between humans a[nd] nematodes is considerably lower, [at] 75 percent.

In light of attempts by Franc[is] Galton and others to connect gene[tic]s with issues of intelligence [and] racial superiority, one must be wa[ry] of this data's context. Indeed, by r[e]ducing animals to subjects of gene[tic] ies or communications studie[s], Hoagland exhibits the very tende[n]cies he bemoans. The awe and wo[n]der of his essay require little of th[e] deconstructivist approach. We mu[st] not, after all, overlook the splend[or] of nature's creatures.

*Aaron Aday*
Bristol, Tenn.

## Fortune's Gamble

Lewis Lapham argues that th[e] United States' geopolitical "sal[es] pitch" of "America must finish th[e] job" is as "disingenuous now as [it] was in 1968" ["Chasing the Pot," Notebook, July]. Therefore, he a[r]

, the United States should "fold hand sooner instead of later . . . epting the loss as a fact beyond hope of rescue by Commander es Bond or the ace of hearts." at Lapham fails to acknowledge hat the United States was not lt the cards; it was the dealer. United States had control over v it was to deal with Iraq and v it embarked on the road to war. as not involuntarily placed in its ent situation.

The important "moral responsiity" argument for remaining in q is not about the morality of war the 1948 State Department morandum of George Kennan. It bout cleaning up the mess we ated, a point Lapham noticeably ids. There is a "moral responsiity" for the United States to se- e Iraq so that its citizens can ceed as a sovereign nation. ould the U.S. armed forces leave country in the near future, there considerable risk that Iraq will sume into violent anarchy. ce the United States has killed usands of Iraqis for unsubstantied reasons, it owes Iraq the reurces and commitment to get the untry back on its feet.

*emy Matthews*
chardson, Tex.

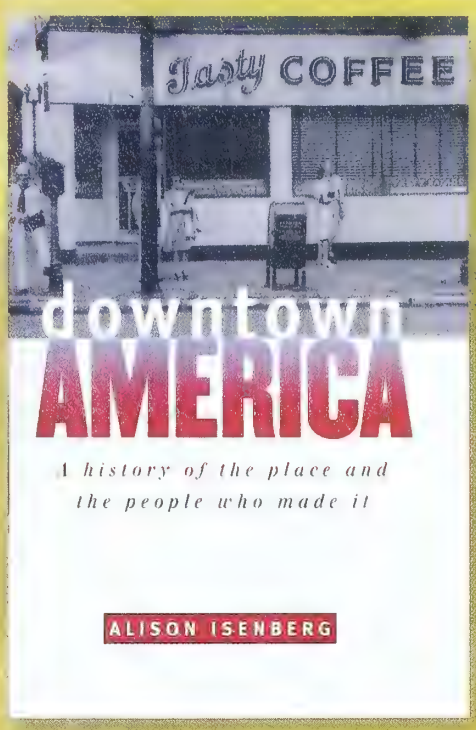
## 'e'll Always Have Cipro

I'd like to make one clarification Ed Regis's informative report Our Own Anthrax," Letter from aryland, July]. Regis notes that ce President Richard Nixon terinated the United States' bioeapons program the country has t produced any more bioweapons. his is mostly, but not entirely, true.

In recent years some U.S. governent agencies and departments, ch as the CIA and the Departent of Defense, have conducted iodefense programs that strain, if ot break, the 1972 Biological Veapons Convention.

In the late 1990s, for example, the IA developed a project named lear Vision," which sought to delop Soviet-style germ bomblets;

*Continued on page 98*




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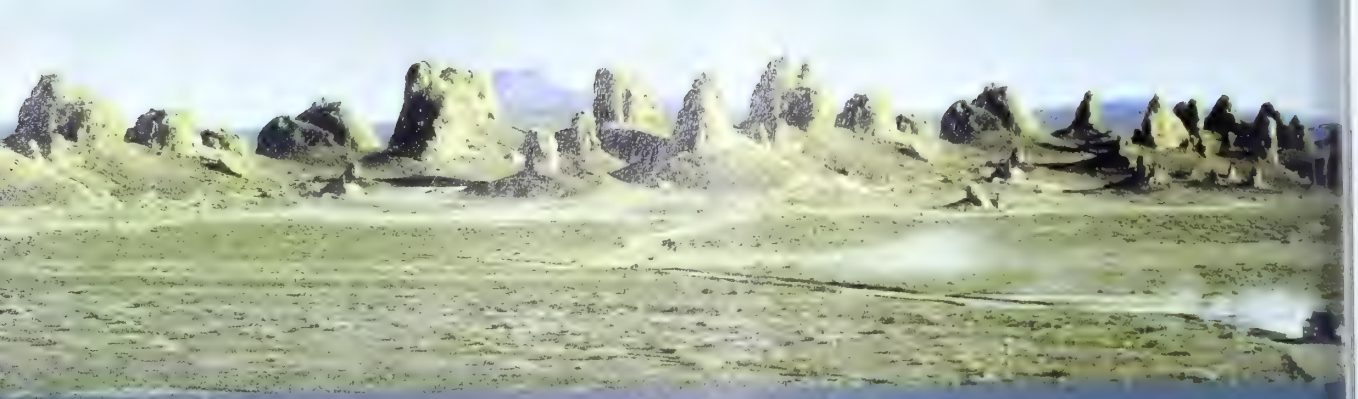
THIS IS WHO WE ARE. [illegible]

SMITH BARNEY
citigroup

# HARPER'S INDEX

umber of Congress members who have signed a letter asking the U.N. to monitor this year's U.S. presidential election : 12
Number of states whose legislatures have considered requesting changes in the No Child Left Behind Act : 31
Number that have considered opting out of the Act's requirements entirely : 6
Number of resolutions regarding the Act that have actually passed : 2
Number of prospective teachers in 19 states wrongly issued failing grades on a licensing exam since January 2003 : 4,100
Minimum number of Americans who registered to vote at strip clubs since May : 4,000
Percentage of college students majoring in the humanities who say politics are relevant to their lives : 72
Percentage of students majoring in computer science who say this : 36
Estimated total number of protesters at the June G-8 conference in Georgia : 310
Estimated number of police per protester : 10
Percentage of New York City residents it would take to fill every inch of pavement in midtown Manhattan : 6
Height in feet of a bronze September 11 memorial depicting a giant teardrop to be built in Jersey City, New Jersey : 98
Funds allocated for Iraq's water programs to be spent on U.S. embassy operating costs : $85,500,000
Number of the 50 airstrikes targeting Iraq's leadership during the invasion last year that hit their target : 0
inimum number of ex-senior government officials who have worked for a major U.S. defense contractor since 1997 : 176
Chance that one of them was a member of Congress who became a registered lobbyist : 1 in 4
Minimum number of Congress members Sun Myung Moon claims attended his March coronation as the "King of Peace" : 20
umber of Congress members present at the June transfer of power from Coalition military forces to the Iraqi government : 0
Number of Afghanistan's 33 provinces with no NATO peacekeeping presence : 24
Ratio of the typical salary of a paid gladiator in ancient Rome to the salary of a doctor or lawyer : 10:1
Number of HealthSouth executives charged with conspiracy, fraud, money laundering, or lying since March 2003 : 20
Number who have pled guilty : 17
Number of these now in prison : 0
Percentage of non-jury trials in Russia that end in conviction : 99
Minimum number of the 542 members of India's lower house who have been charged in criminal cases : 100
Number of months of his term in office that a Kentucky county's top elected official has served from jail : 9
ercentage recidivism rate of youth released from prison who can read at the 11th and 2nd grade level, respectively : 36, 62
Number of words in the first sentence of Bill Clinton's memoir and in that of George W. Bush's, respectively : 49, 5
Percentage of pages in Hillary Clinton's memoir that mention her husband, and vice versa, respectively : 45, 20
Weight in pounds of the only woman ever to win the Miss America pageant twice : 140
Percentage of Jordanian women who are literate : 85
Minimum number of Jordanian women murdered by their families in "honor killings" last year : 15
Number of deaths due to international terrorism last year according to an April State Department report : 307
Number of such deaths cited in a "revised" report the Department released in June : 625
lonths after reporting missing radioactive spent fuel rods last April that a Vermont nuclear plant found them in a safe place : 3
Months before anyone filed an amicus brief supporting a 2002 habeas corpus suit on behalf of the Guantánamo detainees : 10
Number of amicus briefs filed once the case was accepted by the Supreme Court last fall : 17
Chance that a U.S. man says that threatening "to shoot" detainees is sometimes an acceptable way to get information : 1 in 2
Secret access code to the computer controls of the U.S. nuclear-tipped missile arsenal between 1968 and 1976 : 00000000

*Figures are the latest available as of July 2004. Sources are listed on page 96.*
*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*



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CENTER OF GRAVITY
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# READINGS

[Polemic]

## THE FIT AND THE DEAD

*By Mark Greif, from the inaugural issue of* n+1, *published this month. Greif is a senior correspondent with* The American Prospect.

Nothing demonstrates our nostalgia for factory work as well as a modern gym. The lever of the die press no longer commands us at work, yet with the gym we import into our free time vestiges of the equipment of industry. We leave the office, only to seek out the conveyor belt; we willingly submit our legs to the mangle and our arms to the press.

It is crucial that the machines are simple. The inclined planes, levers, pulleys, winches, racks, and belts put earlier stages of technical progress at our disposal in miniature. The elements are visible and intelligible but not dangerous. Displaced and neutralized, they are traces of a necessity that was formerly met with forethought and ingenuity. A farmer once fashioned a pulley, cable, and bar to lift his roof beam; we now thoughtlessly use the same means to work our latissimus dorsi.

Today, when we conceive of our brains as computers, the image of a machine-man, whether Descartes's or La Mettrie's, has an old and venerable quality, like a yellowed poster on an infirmary wall. Blood pressure is hydraulics, strength is mechanics, nutrition is combustion, limbs are levers, joints are ball-in-socket. The exercise world does not make any novel assertion that we are mechanical men and women—we already are that, at least as far as science is concerned—but exercise expresses a will not only to discover but also to regulate the machinelike processes of our bodies.

In the gym people engage in the kind of biological self-regulation that usually occurs in the private realm. Why, then, isn't exercise private, kept at home with eating, sleeping, shitting, grooming, and masturbating? Exercisers make the faces associated with pain, with orgasm, with the sort of exertion that would call others to their immediate aid. But they do not hide their faces. They groan, as if pressing on their bowels. They repeat grim labors, as if mopping the floor. They huff, they shout, and they strain. They appear in tight but shapeless Lycra costumes that reveal the shape of the penis, the labia, the mashed and bandaged breasts, all without allowing the lure of sex.

Although we get the word "gymnasium" from the Greeks, our modern gym is not in their spirit. Athletics in the ancient institution were social and agonistic: they served to train boys for public contests. The gymnasium was closer to what we know today as a boxing gym, with the crucial difference that the gymnasium had two other principal functions, attested to by the customary shrines to Eros (god of love) and Hermes (god of eloquence). Adult men gathered at the gymnasium to admire the most beautiful boys and, in the Greek fashion, to sexually mentor them. It was a place to promote the systematic ed-

casual debates among themselves, modeling the intellectual sociability, separate from overt politics, that is the origin of Western philosophy. Socrates spent much of his time in gymnasia. Aristotle from his philosophical school in the covered walkways of a gymnasium.

The Socratic and Peripatetic methods would find little support in today's gym. What we moderns do there approximates mute privacy. The Greeks put their genuinely private acts into the household, the *oikos*. Hannah Arendt interpreted this strong separation of the household from the public as evidence of a general truth: that it is necessary to keep the acts that sustain naked life away from observation. A place for withdrawal, a sphere free from public scrutiny, provides the foundation for a public person—someone confident enough to take the drastic risks of public life, to think and to speak against others, to make independent decisions. In privacy, or alone with one's family, the speechless appetites and pains of staying alive can be separately undertaken.

The modern gym is an atomized space in which one does private things in public, with the self-conscious loneliness of a body acting as if it were still in private. One undergoes these contortions to undo and remake the private self, and if the watching others aren't entitled to approve, some imagined aggregate other does. Modern gyms move biology into the nonsocial company of strangers. You are supposed to coexist but not look closely, to wipe down the metal handlebars and rubber mats to obliterate the traces of your presence.

Perhaps it is a punishment for our liberation. The most onerous forms of necessity, the laborious struggles for food and shelter, have been largely overcome. It might have been naive to think this freedom would push us toward civilized public pursuits, as in Periclean Athens, or simple delight in what exists, as in Eden. The true payoff of a society that has chosen to make private freedoms its main substance is unexpected: a form of self-regulation that drags biological life into the light as a social attraction.

The only truly essential pieces of equipment in modern exercise are numbers. Whether at the gym or on the running path, counting is the fundamental technology. As the weights that one lifts are counted, so are distances run, times exercised, heart rates elevated. A simple test of whether an activity is modern exercise is to ask whether it could be done meaningfully without counting or measuring. Forms of exercise that do away with machines, as running does, cannot do away with this.

The other location where an individual's numbers attain such talismanic status is the doctor's office, and indeed there is a certain similarity between the places where exercise is done and where people go to be tested and treated for illness. In the doctor's office, the blood lab, and the hospital, you are at the mercy of counting experts. A nurse tightens an arm cuff, links you to an EKG, measures your height and weight; a lab technician takes a blood sample; the clipboard with your numbers is passed; and at last the doc-

[Appraisal]

## IF YOU BUILD IT . . .

*The following phrases were culled by Sam Frank from scouting reports of the first fifty rounds of the 2004 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft.*

Physical specimen. Body maxed. Raw-boned physique. Chiseled. Supple. Avid w/ weights. Weight-room strong. Low body-fat. Developed upper half tapers to a defined waist, tapers to long, strong legs. Thin ankles. Large calves. Muscular thighs. Long extremities. Big forearms. Soft hands. Long fingers. High hands. High-waisted. High pockets. High rear. Baby-faced. Country-boy build. Good-looking athlete.

Tall, lean, greyhoundlike body. Race-horse type body. Durable workhorse. Physically a horse. A horse. Strong as an ox. Strong like a bull. Bulldog. Bulldog competitor. Bulldog type. Good muscle development, bulldog look. A man, physically.

Can hit 'em high & far. Nervous bat. Fervent in hit approach. Slight toilet-seat hitting approach. Feel for wood. Good trigger. One-hand finish. Does it easy. Clean as a whistle. Uses hands to hit. Hands catch the ball. Knows he can catch & throw. A gun for an arm. Blessed cannon arm. Arm works good.

A gamer. Intense gamer. Plays games hard. Plays game right. Knows how to play the game. Knows how to win. Shows up to play. Comes to work every day. Blue-collar type. Goes about business well. Work ethic that won't quit. No quit in him. Turns up dial when he has to.

Guy you want on your team. Outstanding person. Good kid. Just waiting to be molded. Very serviceable. Leaves it all on the field. Hustler. Hustles.



COURTESY INGRAM GALLERY, TORONTO

Waiting, *by Sean Yelland. An exhibition of his work will be held this winter at the Ingram Gallery, in Toronto.*

tor takes his seat, a mechanic who wears the white robe of an angel. In specialist language, exacerbating your dread and expectation, you are told your numbers for cholesterol (two types), your white cells, your iron and urinalysis. He hardly needs to remind you that these numbers correlate with your chances of survival.

Turning to the gym you gain the anxious freedom to count yourself. What a terrifying relief it must be. Here are numbers that you can change. The gym becomes a voluntary hospital. You are assured that these numbers, as well as those in the doctor's files, will correspond to the measure of your days. With willpower and discipline, you will be transformed. Your curious compilation of numbers thus becomes an essential aspect of your identity, sometimes the most essential, more preoccupying even than your thoughts and dreams, as you discover what excellent numbers you can become, and how immortal.

The person who does not exercise is, in our current conception, a slow suicide. He fails to take responsibility for his life. He does not labor strenuously to forestall his death. We therefore begin to think he was complicit in it. It may be a comfort when an acquaintance dies to remember that he did not eat well or failed to take up running. The nonexerciser is lumped with other unfortunates whom we pity, their value compromised by their neglect, by their failure to assure the fullest possible term of physical existence. The nonexerciser joins all the unfit: the slow, the elderly, the poor, the hopeless.

Imagine a society that believed that the senses could be used up: eyesight dimmed the more vivid sights you saw, hearing diminished the more intense sounds you heard. Such a conception would inevitably change the way people spent their days. Would they expend their powers on the most saturated colors, the most intoxicating sounds? Or might they refuse to move, eyes shut, ears covered, nursing the reserves of sensation? From the extreme materialist gratifications of our own hedonistic society, commanding immediate comfort and happiness, we recoil to the frugal economics of health and chase a longer span of happiness deferred, and comforts delayed, by disposing of the better portion of our lives in life preservation.

Exercise does make you, as a statistic, part of a different aggregate category that dies with less frequency at successive ages. It accords a gain in odds. This is the public rationale for the billions of hours annually logged in the gym. But for its most ardent practitioners, exercise in its contemporary form is largely a quest

for certain states of isolation. Voluntary confinement is a more common phenomenon than the person who is unhappy because he never exercises is the exerciser who suffers from missing one or two days of his routines. In the pursuit of morality, in his own mind it matters both factual and [illegible] each moment based on what he ate, what he drank, how much he exercised, and what relation all this bears to the new recommendations and warnings he just heard on the television's hourly health report.

The less respectable but perhaps more powerful pleasure in daily exercise is the course thinness. Every exerciser knows that the propensity to put on weight is the physical expression of a moral failing. In our era of abundance, nutrition makes one fat rather than well fed, and only anorexics have the willpower to stop eating and die. Exercise serves a particular function in the life of a person who conceives sexual desirability as the truth about herself most worth defending, and youth has become permanent with the ubiquitous demand that adults maintain an outward show of juvenile sexuality.

The shock troops of modern exercise are young women. Recently the beneficiary of a sexually mature body, and among the few possessors by native right of the reduced body type our culture prefers, the woman of twenty-two is a paradoxical figure. She is not yet among the discounted, but she knows her destiny and begins immediately to get ahead in the race to preserve a form that must never exceed the barest minimum of flesh. A refreshing honesty can exist among these exercisers, who are not yet caught up in the doctrine of health. The rising incidence of smoking among young women, which worries public-health advocates, is coincident with the rising incidence of gym exercise, which doesn't. While the cigarette suppresses appetite (rebelliously), the StairMaster attacks calories (obediently). Each can become intensely, erotically pleasurable, and neither is really meant for health or longevity.

The doctrine of thinness introduces a radical fantasy of exercise down to the bone, a dream of a body unencumbered by corporeal excess. Thanatos enters through the door opened by Eros, and exercise flirts with a will to annihilate the body rather than to preserve its longevity. Without an accompanying ideology of health, the quest for thinness would liquidate all restraint, generating a death's-head vision of exercise. Health returns as the only brake on a practice that otherwise would become a kind of naked aggression against the flesh.

With health in place, the aggression is more often carried out psychically, in the form of an undercurrent of hatred for the corrupt human form that continually undoes the labor you invest in it. Yet the bitterness of watching your body undermine your efforts is restrained by a certain compensation. If the hated body is the object of battle, a certain pleasure still emerges from the unending struggle, and, in a hedonistic order divided against its own luxuries, at least this pleasure, if no other, can be made to go on forever.

An enigma of exercise is the proselytizing urge that seems always to accompany it. No one who plays baseball or hockey expects everyone else to play the sport. The gym-goer, on the other hand, is a solitary evangelist, continually knocking on your door to get you to recognize the power that will not give him peace.

Running is most insidious, as it goes beyond proselytizing to become a direct invasion of public space. It lays the counting, the pacing, the controlled frenzy, the skeletal look, the undergarments-as-outergarments, on top of the ordinary practice of an outdoor walk. One thing that can be said for a gym is that a shared understanding links everyone who works out in its mirrored and pungent hangar. All consent to undertake their separate exertions and hide any mutual regard, as in a well-ordered masturbatorium. The gym is in this sense more polite than the narrow riverside, sidewalk, nature path, or wherever the runner takes over shared places for himself. With his speed and narcissistic intensity the runner corrupts the space of walking, thinking, talking, and everyday contact. He jostles the idler out of his reverie, races around pedestrians in conversation. He opposes sociability and solitude by publicly sweating on them.

When exercise does become truly shared, as in the aerobics that come close to dance, or the hard-core bodybuilding that is always erotic and fraternal, it nears sport or art and starts to reverse itself. When exercise is done in a private home, or in untenanted landscapes, or spontaneously, without formal method, apparatus, or counting, it recovers certain eccentric freedoms and private techniques of the self. Modern exercise, however, is concerned not with the creative process of reproduction (as in activities-in-common) or the pure discoveries of solitude (as in private eccentricity); it pursues instead an idea of replication, a struggle to incarnate the shape and capabilities of others in the material of one's own body, without invention and without exchange.

Our current practices are turning us inside out. Hidden flesh has become public front, and the private medical truth of bodily health has become psychic self-regard. The consequences are not only the flooding of consciousness with a numbered and regulated body, or the distrac-

# 50,000,000 without power

**August 14th** marks the anniversary of the East Coast blackout that stranded 50 million people without electricity - leaving them without the daily necessities that power provides, which we take for granted. Imagine yourself in the midst of uncertainty, without news updates, a dependable light source, or the batteries it takes to make devices work.

**Etón** radios (with integrated flashlights) provide an always-powered solution when needed most, empowering you to be ready for the next emergency. Whether on the road or in the home, don't be left in the dark.

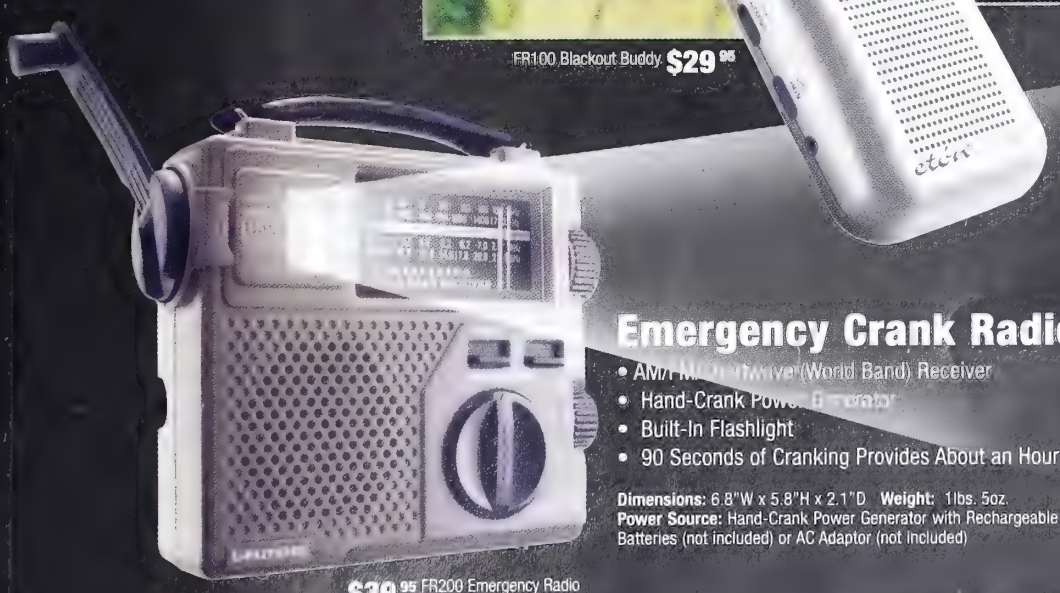
## Emergency Plug-in Radio with Blackout Alert

- Automatically Turns-On Radio/Light during Power Outages
- Patent-Pending Plug-In Design Recharges Internal Battery
- AM/FM Radio
- Clock with Alarm

**Dimensions:** 3"W x 5"H x 1.4"D **Weight:** 7.4 oz
**Power Source:** AC Power/internal battery



FR100 Blackout Buddy **$29.95**



## Emergency Crank Radio

- AM/FM Multi-Active (World Band) Receiver
- Hand-Crank Power Generator
- Built-In Flashlight
- 90 Seconds of Cranking Provides About an Hour of Radio Play

**Dimensions:** 6.8"W x 5.8"H x 2.1"D **Weight:** 1lbs. 5oz.
**Power Source:** Hand-Crank Power Generator with Rechargeable Battery Pack, 3 AA Batteries (not included) or AC Adaptor (not included)

**$39.95** FR200 Emergency Radio

The Etón FR100 Blackout Buddy is $29.95 plus $7.50 for shipping & handling and applicable taxes. The FR200 is only $39.95 (plus $10.00 shipping & handling and applicable taxes) or two payments of $25.53 (plus tax).

**To order Blackout Buddy or the FR200, please call us toll-free at 1-800-793-6542 ext. HARP05**

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tion from living that comes with endless life maintenance, but the liquidation of the last untouched spheres of privacy, with the result that biological life itself has become a spectacle.

"You are condemned. You are condemned. You are condemned." This is the chant the machines make beneath the roar of the gym floor. This is not the future we wanted. That prickling beneath the exerciser's skin as he steps off the treadmill is only his reduced existence, scratching the truth of who he is now, from the inside out.

[Primer]

## CONTROLLING THE HOUSE

*From an interview with Lorenzo Steele, a former corrections officer at Riker's Island, in the fourth anniversary issue of* Don Diva, *a magazine for "the underdogs of the underworld." The interview was conducted by Susan Hampstead.*

DD: Tell the *Don Diva* readers what happens to you when you first get to Riker's Island.

LS: As soon as you come in, there will be a bunch of inmates trying to see what you got on so they can take it. They call it "shopping." So if you got on some fresh shit the other inmates are gonna try to take it off you. If you don't know anybody in the housing area, you're automatically a victim and your shit will get taken. And if you don't give it up, then they fuck you up and take it from you. The only exception is if you know someone with "juice" in the house.

DD: Say I'm in there for jumping a turnstile. Am I going to be in there with hardened criminals?

LS: At first you'll be in there with everyone. Muggers, thieves, rapists, and murderers are all together.

DD: What kinds of violent incidents occur?

LS: One time I was looking out the window at the little yard. One inmate was doing push-ups, and another dude stood over him and grabbed him by the neck and was just cutting him, boom, boom, boom, with a razor blade in his face. The windows were faded so I couldn't see the razor blade, but I saw all the blood, because the dude had cut him like seventy times across the face. There was another incident where a female inmate was on one line with her unit and a men's unit passed by in the same hallway. She threw her hood on and jumped into the men's line and went back to her boyfriend's unit. She was gang raped and beaten into a coma.

DD: Where do they send inmates after they've been cut?

LS: They generally go to another building, but we may just change their housing, in which case they will meet that person again. It may be in the mess hall, gym, or on the visit, but they will meet again. There have been several incidents with inmates meeting up in the visiting room with their families and being cut from ear to ear right in front of their family. The shit is crazy. That's one thing about prison: there is no hiding. There are some individuals who are labeled as "cutters"—these people have to wear mittens made of a thick burlap-type material.

DD: How do inmates get weapons?

LS: In sneakers coming on the visits or in packages. Someone once smuggled a small gun in the sole of a Timberland boot, and that's why inmates cannot have Timbs anymore—they can't even have sneakers with bubbles in them, because people cut the bubbles and stuff razors and drugs in them. Officers bring shit in, too.

DD: What are some of the tools they use to make weapons?

LS: The tiles in the ceiling have metal rods, so they go in the bathroom, lift up a tile, and take the metal pieces. You can see the marks on the floor where they sharpened them. I sharpen my shit the same way they do.

DD: Officers have shanks, too?

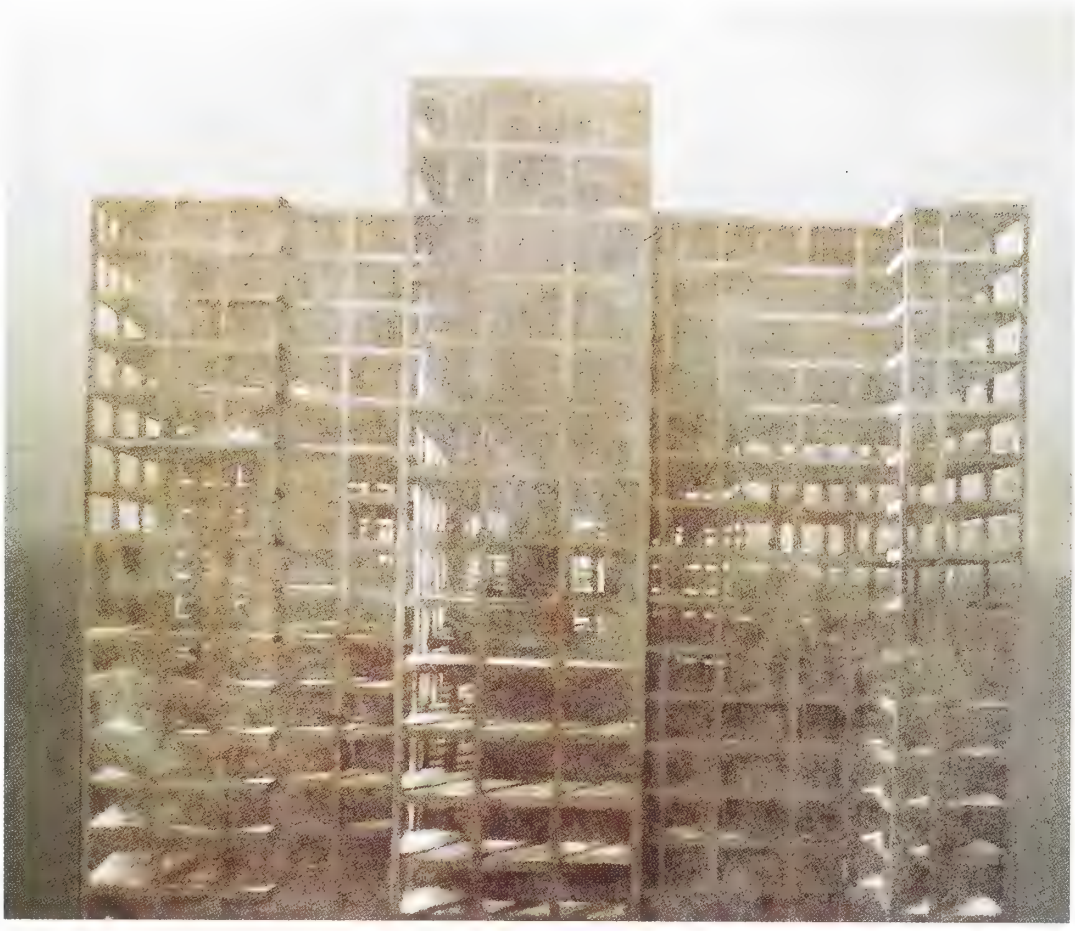
LS: Yeah. We aren't given guns, and we have to protect ourselves. We're in jail, too. I ain't gonna die in there, unless somebody gonna die with me. If we gonna get it on, then let's get it on. I had my little ice picks, one for each hand. Shit, I'm not the only one—most officers got knives and shit, too.

DD: Do the officers get cut as well?

LS: Hell yeah, the officers get cut. Some of this stuff you don't really hear about. Like in the paper it might say, "Officer assaulted," but sometimes these things don't really make the paper. You can't show any fear. If you show fear they will pick on you, throw shit at you, cut you, and beat you. It could get to the point where inmates are extorting officers, making them bring in things like razors, food, and drugs. Some COs do it just to make their shift easier.

DD: How often do you shake down the cells?

LS: It depends on if there was an incident, or sometimes they pick random houses and find razors or shanks. A popular way to conceal razors is to wet a wad of toilet paper and then place the blade inside of it and then throw it up against the wall and smear the tissue flat until it appears to be a piece of the wall's plaster. Inmates are legendary for



COURTESY THE ARTIST

Untitled Tower, *by Mark Shetabi. An exhibition of his work will take place next spring at Locks Gallery, in Philadelphia.*

keeping razors in their mouths. Being able to "spit out a razor" is like a magic trick in jail. You could be in the mess hall, get into an altercation with another inmate, and the next thing you know he's spit out two razors from both sides of his mouth and your face is slashed up. I know of an incident where an inmate was handcuffed behind his back, and he was able to pull his body through his arms, get his hands in front of him, spit a razor out of his mouth, and cut someone from ear to ear. A nigga will become Houdini when it comes to survival. Spitting razors became such a problem that inmates immediately punched other inmates in the mouth as soon as an argument began. This was so that if the other inmate did have razors in his mouth, he would cut his own mouth up before even getting the opportunity to spit them out. Then there is "boofing." That's when an inmate who's being taken to a visit or to court steals a rubber glove and cuts a finger off of it, then wraps a razor in toilet paper and sticks the wrapped razor blade into the cut-off finger, ties a string to it, greases his asshole, and sticks the finger in his ass. When he sees the person he wants to cut, he pulls the string and gets the razor. You can take away all access to weapons and shit, and in order to survive a nigga will adapt and get creative when his life is in danger. It is really survival of the fittest in prison—the shit is a jungle for real.

DD: What happens if an inmate gets caught cutting someone?

LS: Prison officials have started re-arresting people and giving them new charges, so you get extra time put on to your original time. Some people are in there for jumping turnstiles and end up getting twenty-five to life because somebody cut them and they have to defend themselves and retaliate.

DD: Tell me some of the names they have for these cuts.

LS: You got the "Buck Fifty," meaning you got 150 stitches. Also the "telephone cut,"

meaning you violated somebody's telephone and the cut goes from the ear to the mouth.

DD: Explain the phone situation.

LS: You get six minutes on the phone a day. The officers are supposed to make sure everybody gets to use the phone, but a lot of officers are scared to do their jobs. I can understand though, because it's serious. There's a lot of racism on Riker's Island, so if you're black you cannot just walk up and use the "Puerto Rican phone," and vice versa. So whoever is controlling the phone is controlling the house. Every now and then someone would exceed their boundaries, and the consequences were getting cut or [cut]!

A lot of people cut just for recreation, to make time go by. Or if there's an officer on duty that they don't like, they would cut another inmate and the officer will have to stay several hours past their shift so that he/she can write a report explaining why they "allowed" the incident to take place. Meaning, now you can't go home either.

DD: Okay, this is something that everyone wants to know . . . What about rape?

LS: Yeah, it happens, it definitely happens. See, with the adolescents sometimes they used to just wait until midnight and take the deodorant stick and stick it in a boy's ass. They have nothing to do all day, and they just sit there and be like, "Damn, what we gonna do today?"

DD: Do you see homosexual relationships?

LS: Yeah, they have them. There were times I would see two adolescents in the bed under the covers. They both had their clothes on, but I could see from the position that one person's dick would be touching the other's butt somehow. They aren't doing anything—but it's just the mere fact that two males could be that close and it's all right! Sometimes one guy would be talking on the phone to a girl and another guy would be sitting down next to him stroking his waves.

DD: Enough of this homo shit. Is there fucking going on in the visiting room? If my man is in jail can I come see him and get my shit off?

LS: The visiting rooms are open areas and everyone is in plain view. The most that can go down is a hand job and occasionally some head. It really depends what officer is on duty in the visiting room.

DD: What about the condition of the prison?

LS: I used to do the tour at nights, and I would see rats and all types of water bugs running around. The phones are dirty and the place is just plain ol' filthy. The food is horrible. You will be served just about anything—rotten fruit, half-cooked chicken, burned food, whatever. No one really cares, so there is no recourse. For the most part you better get used to bread and water for real. It is not a joke.

DD: What is actually in the cell?

LS: You have a filthy toilet with no cover, a rusty sink, and a metal frame they call a bed. Inmates use the toilet as a refrigerator in the summer to keep milk cool. This shit is just disgusting. The conditions are not fit for a human being. You are literally treated like an animal.

DD: Why did you agree to talk to us, knowing that there may be repercussions?

LS: For these young kids, who have no clue what's going on in prisons. Nobody's telling them, and it's just hell. It's hell for me and I go home

[Litany]

## THE FBI STORY

*From a recently released Behavioral and Ethical Trends Analysis report compiled by the FBI's Office of Professional Responsibility.*

An agent engaged in theft of informant funds in excess of $400,000.

An agent was calling sex hot lines with Bureau phones while on duty.

An agent was arrested for DWI and was involved in a hit-and-run after causing injury to a private citizen with a Bureau vehicle while on duty.

An agent engaged in nonconsensual sexual acts (rape) with a subordinate.

An agent engaged in sexual abuse of minor children, physical assault of an adult female.

An agent was dismissed for misuse of a government vehicle on multiple occasions: prostitutes in vehicles, solicitation of prostitution, indecent exposure.

An agent was arrested for rape, child abuse, and second-degree sex-offense charges. Agent indicted in excess of twenty sex abuse charges.

An agent used crack cocaine on a frequent basis and was apprehended with crack pipes.

An agent was fired for sexual behavior in public, public masturbation, frequent assault. Agent engaged in "fetishism."

An agent engaged in espionage with a hostile foreign government.

An agent used his Bureau weapon to shoot his spouse.

An agent killed his informant after years of inappropriate sexual relationship with her. Agent covered up the murder.

every day, but I'm still scared for my life. I'm traumatized for life from the things I see and hear. You got adolescents coming through getting twenty-five to thirty-five years because of how they carry themselves in there. It's a trap designed for these kids to fall in.

[Account]

## IN COLD BLOOD

*From a report filed by Derek Brunet, a deputy at the Hernando County, Florida, Sheriff's Department.*

On 05 23 2004, at approximately 1945 hours, I responded to 3207 Strauss Street in reference to an animal complaint. Dispatch advised that a white female, Cynthia Christensen, had just bitten the head off of complainant Jennie Smith's pet snake.

Upon arrival I made contact with Jennie Smith and Charles Burge. Jennie stated that at approximately 1830 hours, Cynthia Christensen had come down the street riding in a mobilized wheelchair, and was visiting with them at 3207 Strauss Street. Jennie stated that she had a pet snake python that she had purchased one week ago for $26. Jennie stated that her friend Kenny Foss was holding the snake when Cynthia asked to hold it. Kenny then handed the snake to Cynthia. While holding the snake, Cynthia stated aloud, "I'm going to bite the snake's head off." Jennie stated that she heard her say this; however, she did not actually see Cynthia bite the snake's head off. When she looked over at Cynthia she observed the snake in Cynthia's hand with the head missing. Jennie stated that Charles Burge then grabbed the snake and threw it in the woods so she would not be upset. As Jennie was speaking to me, she was extremely upset and crying, stating the snake never did anything to Cynthia, why would she kill it like that? Jennie stated that Cynthia then rode away in her wheelchair.

I made contact with the homeowner, Kenny Foss. Kenny stated that while Cynthia was holding Jennie's pet python, he heard her state, "I'm going to bite the snake's head off." When he turned back around to look at her, he observed Cynthia holding the snake in her hand with the snake's head missing and blood dripping down her arm from the snake.

Charles retrieved the snake from the woods. I observed the snake to be approximately 1½ feet in length. The snake was headless and did not have any other marks or injuries to its body. At this time, the snake's head has not been found.

I then made contact with Cynthia Christensen. At first she stated she was holding the snake and held it to her mouth and the snake bit her on the lip and she threw it on the ground. Then the dog that was in the yard came over and bit the snake's head off. She then changed her story, stating she held the snake to her mouth and the snake bit her lip and was holding onto her lip, and this is why she stated she was going to bite the snake's head off. She then pulled the snake from her lip, throwing it on the ground, and the dog bit the snake's head off. Finally, she stated she was holding the snake to her mouth and the snake bit her a little, so she bit it back.

[Proposal]

## EXTERMINATE THE BRUTES

*From a letter allegedly drafted by advisers to the director-general of Zimbabwe's secret police. The document, dated June 8, was leaked to R. W. Johnson, southern Africa correspondent for the* Sunday Times. *Between 2000 and 2004, 90 percent of the country's 4,500 white-owned farms were seized for redistribution, though most of the arable land has since been claimed by cabinet ministers, army officers, and officials of President Mugabe's Zanu PF Party.*

SOLUTION TO THE WHITE PROBLEM

As directed we considered the problem you posed for us and offer the following as the simplest and quickest method of ridding Zimbabwe of all undesirable whites without exposing us to an overwhelming backlash. It will also solve most of the farm acquisitions without recourse to nationalization and all the problems associated with that.

1) There is an act of strategic economic sabotage. Peter Tatchell [a British activist] has threatened this on British TV, and there are active moves within the MDC [Movement for Democratic Change, Zimbabwe's main opposition party] to shift from passive to active resistance. Such an activity can therefore be easily and plausibly attributed to British-funded terrorists.

2) Such an attack on a strategic installation could almost be construed as an act of war. Britain is blamed for funding the terrorists and therefore the attack. This alone is an adequate reason to break off diplomatic relations with Britain.

3) In view of the deteriorating situation vis-à-vis Britain, all British Nationals are asked to leave within, say, forty-eight hours or risk being interned as suspected terrorists or terrorist sympathizers.



*[illegible] the month before.*

We estimate that 75 percent of the [illegible] Britain. Yes, many people renounced their British citizenship, but in most cases at least one member of the family kept their British passport. If the [illegible] the children have [illegible] the other half packing up in Dublin.

After the initial intimidation caused by police at roadblocks demanding to see proof that the whites encountered do not have British citizenship will [illegible] others who would [illegible] to give up and go. Similarly, the removal of such a large number of whites will make many of the private schools unattractive for white parents to send their children to, and will increase the pressure [illegible]

We [illegible] the [illegible] British citizenship [illegible] hoping the [illegible] If implemented soon, we could be almost entirely free of them before the [illegible] parliamentary elections.

[Directives]

# NOT NECESSARILY THE NEWS

*From internal memos sent by Fox News's senior editorial vice president John Moody to his staff. The memos were leaked by Fox News employees to Robert Greenwald this year and released by Moveon.org in July.*

5/26/2003

The tax cut passed last night by the Senate, though less than half what Bush originally proposed, contains some important victories for the administration. The D.C. crew will parse the bill and explain how it will fatten—marginally—your wallet.

5/29/2003

Bush's G-8 trip is actually less important than

his fledgling efforts to knock together the Israeli and Palestinian PMs' heads. Let's keep in mind that the G-8 contains the most obstreperous dissidents against the war on terror.

6/2/2003
Heads of state don't leave G-8 meetings early unless they have good reasons. President Bush has two: he has to get to Egypt, and he doesn't like the French. Let's explain to viewers that despite the tepid handshake, Bush and Chirac are far from reconciled, as are the U.S. and Germany.

6/3/2003
The President is doing something that few of his predecessors dared undertake: putting the U.S. case for Mideast peace to an Arab summit. His political courage and tactical cunning are worth noting in our reporting through the day.

The national forest as pot-field story is pure Fox.

3/23/2004
The so-called 9/11 Commission has already been meeting. In fact, this is the eighth session. The fact that former Clinton and both former and current Bush Administration officials are testifying gives it a certain tension, but do not turn this into Watergate. Remember the fleeting sense of national unity that emerged from this tragedy. Let's not desecrate that.

3/25/2004
As is often the case, the real news in Iraq is being obscured by temporary tragedy. The creation of a defense ministry, which will be run by Iraqis, is a major step forward in the country's redevelopment.

3/31/2004
The Intl. Court of Justice ruling against the U.S. is something that many Americans might find offensive. We'll take a look at just what this court is, and what gives it the right to tell U.S. courts what to do with death-row prisoners.

4/4/2004
Into Fallujah: It's called Operation Vigilant Resolve, and it began Monday morning with the U.S. and Iraqi military surrounding Fallujah. We will cover this hour by hour today, explaining repeatedly why it is happening. It won't be long before some people start to decry the use of "excessive force." We won't be among that group.

The continuing carnage in Iraq—mostly the deaths of seven U.S. troops in Sadr City—is leaving the American military little choice but to punish perpetrators. When this happens, we should be ready to put in context the events that led to it. More than 600 U.S. military dead, attacks on the U.N. headquarters last year, assassination of Iraqi officials who work with the coalition, the deaths of Spanish troops last fall, the outrage in Fallujah: whatever happens, it is richly deserved.

4/6/2004
Do not fall into the easy trap of mourning the loss of U.S. lives in Iraq and asking out loud why are we there? The U.S. is in Iraq to help a country brutalized for thirty years protect the gains made by Operation Iraqi Freedom and set it on the path to democracy. Some people in Iraq don't want that to happen. That is why American GIs are dying. And what we should remind our viewers.

Fierce is a good word, but let's find a few synonyms.

[Pitch]
## CLUCKING POINTS

*From the casting specs for the voice-over on a series of television commercials for KFC. Auditions for the part were held last winter.*

*1. The voice should be confident.*
This is a confident, progressively thinking brand. The voice should project that confidence. There should be some authority in the KFC voice. Some bass notes.

*2. The voice should be fun.*
Chicken, relatively speaking, is a fun food to eat. The voice should have a playful, positive quality to it—and perhaps a touch of the irreverence and sass that the Colonel himself had.

*3. The voice should be inclusive.*
The voice should have broad appeal. It should elicit a sort of instant universal head nod. It should sound like someone anybody would want to hang out and eat some chicken with.

*4. The voice should be young and male.*
The brand personality is male. It's genuine. It's honest. It's Middle American. It's young. It's even a little brash.

*5. The voice needs to sell.*
There is a lot of quick, price-point copy, and it needs to hit.

The hearing on Rush Limbaugh's medical records could be a death blow to the case against him. If the three-judge panel rules that his doctor's records cannot be used by the prosecution, the case is likely to go away.

[Unverifiable] Instead, here's part of what [Senate Foreign Relations Affairs Committee Chairman Richard Lugar will say:

[U.N. Oil-for-Food Program] corruption was not solely a product of Saddam Hussein's machinations. It required members of the U.N. Security Council who were willing to be complicit in his activities, and he required U.N. officials and contractors who were dishonest, inattentive, or willing to make damaging compromises in pursuit of a compassionate mission.

4/20/2004

It should be obvious that we are working hard on the oil for food scandal story. Please be disposed to use stories on this topic, rather than not.

4/23/2004

At the Vatican, Catholic theologians are discussing the moral responsibility of lawmakers who claim to be Catholics. While John Kerry's name will probably never be mentioned specifically, the debate includes his candidacy.

4/26/2004

Ribbons or medals? Which did John Kerry throw away after he returned from Vietnam. This may become an issue for him today. His perceived disrespect for the military could be more damaging to the candidate than questions about his actions in uniform.

4/27/2004

Fighting overnight in Najaf didn't go the way the militants there had hoped. Reports say forty-three of them were killed, with no U.S. casualties being reported. This is one of the few times we've gotten a count of enemy dead. Let's use that to make the point what happens when terrorists take on the coalition.

4/28/2004

Let's refer to the U.S. Marines we see in the foreground as "sharpshooters" not snipers, which carries a negative connotation.

5/5/2004

The pictures from Abu Ghraib prison are disturbing. They have rightly provoked outrage. Today we have a picture aired on Al Arabiya of an American hostage being held with a scarf over his eyes, clearly against his will. Who's outraged on his behalf?

[Index]

# HOUSE OF THE DEAD

*The following letter is among the evidence being collected by Amal Kadham Swadi, a lawyer working on behalf of female detainees in Iraq. Swadi believes the letter was written by an inmate at Abu Ghraib prison and smuggled out via a translator last December. The allegations of rape at Abu Ghraib were corroborated by General Antonio Taguba in his March report.*

To my family and honorable friends in Al-Ramadi, Al-Khalidiyah, and Fallujah. To all honorable people in the world, greetings from God to you.

This is a letter from your sister Noor in the Jewish prison of Abu Ghraib. Where shall I start? O honorable people, the pen is unable to describe . . . Should I describe to you hunger while you are eating? Or should I describe to you thirst while you are drinking? Or should I describe to you sleepless nights while you are sleeping? Or should I describe to you our nakedness while you are dressed? Brothers, when we see your trucks and cars carrying construction material, and when we see the license plates of the cars, and find them carrying the name of my people and my district, I begin telling myself that my family and brothers have sold their honor for the dollar.

How can I describe to you the torture while still protecting your honor and defending trustworthiness? O scholars of religion, have you forgotten the message that was brought to you by the truthful and trustworthy Abu Al-Qasim Muhammad (may Allah be pleased with him)? Have you forgotten us because of the money you are receiving from the Jews? We are going to hold you responsible in front of the one and only Allah. O honorable people! Remember the days you were looking at your brothers in Palestine. We are suffering what we are suffering when we see the Jews pouring their wine in front of us and raping our women like vicious animals. And they run around having fun with those who sell their honor cheap.

O honorable people! How many times do you have to die? Our honor has been raped, our clothes have been torn, and our tears are running, but we have no support from anyone.

I do not want to bid you farewell yet. I want to say fear Allah and guard your newborns. Bellies have become full with children of adulteries.

Before I say farewell, I am telling the honorable people, if you have the weapons, kill us with the enemies inside the prisons, for Allah's sake, for Allah's sake, for Allah's sake.

# Quietly Setting A Whole New Standard.

Experience the unmatched combination of noise reduction and audio performance of our QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic Noise Cancelling® headphones.




wanted noise is everywhere. The engine roar inside an plane cabin. The blaring sounds of city ets. The annoying din of the office. se® QuietComfort® 2 Acoustic ise Cancelling headphones let u escape it all. Put them on and into a safe haven – where u can relax and enjoy peace l solitude or listen to your orite music.

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r original noise-reducing head- ones were designed primarily for plane travelers. But owners soon started ling us how much they enjoyed them in other noisy ices. So we designed our QuietComfort® 2 headphones ound the same patented technology that electronically ntifies and dramatically reduces noise, while faithfully serving the music, movie dialogue or tranquility you desire. e *Philadelphia Daily News* says that "Even in the noisiest vironment, wearing these phones creates a calming, quiet ne for easy listening or just snoozing."

## Our Best Sound Ever.

uietComfort® 2 headphones deliver the best audio rformance we've ever developed for headphones. Highs are pressively crisp and clean. Lows are deep and enveloping. ocals are reproduced with lifelike authenticity. When idio critic Wayne Thompson heard our QuietComfort® 2 headphones, he reported, "Bose engineers have made major improvements." Whether you're looking for noise reduction or high-performance headphones for music, we think you'll agree – uietComfort® 2 headphones simply make your usic sound better.



## Enhanced Comfort and Portability.

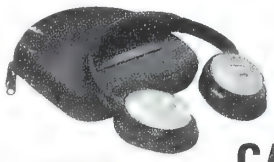
Respected columnist Rich Warren says, "The QuietComfort 2 lives up to its name, enveloping you in blissful sound in the utmost comfort. It's easy to forget they're on your head." To enjoy peace and quiet, simply turn them on. To add Bose quality sound, attach the included audio cord and connect them to a home stereo, laptop computer, portable CD/DVD/MP3 player or in-flight audio system. When you're done, their convenient fold-flat design allows you to quickly tuck your headphones away in a bag or briefcase, so you can take them almost anywhere.

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We don't expect you to take our word for how dramatically our headphones reduce noise, how clean and full they sound or how comfortably they fit. So we invite you to try them for 30 days, risk free. If you can live without them, return them for a full refund. It's that simple. When you call, be sure to ask about our **financing options.**

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[Critique]

# RAG TIME

*From a May 23 commencement address delivered at Hofstra University by E. L. Doctorow. Doctorow's assertion that Saddam Hussein possessed no weapons of mass destruction provoked the audience to such outrage that he was forced to interrupt the speech while the university president restored order.*

I write stories. That is my profession. From the earliest days of my life I have considered stories very important. When they are told well we can believe them and live by them and hold to the truths they embody. Think of the very old stories, the stories of the Bible, for example. They are well and meaningfully told, and so we are instructed and moved and try to live according to the truths discovered in them.

Because I've been telling stories all my life, I've become a pretty good judge of the stories other people tell. I've been listening for almost four years now to the stories the President of the United States tells. And, sadly, they are not good stories. They are not good stories because they are not true. One story he told was that the country of Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and was intending shortly to use them on us. That was a scary story all right, but it was not true. Another story was that the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, was in partnership with the terrorists of Al Qaeda. And that turned out to be untrue.

But off we went to war on the basis of these stories. And there soon followed the story that the invasion of Iraq was a "mission accomplished," and that, tragically, is not a true story. It is so untrue that nobody is allowed to photograph the return of our fallen servicemen and women as, to this day, they are brought back to the United States in their coffins. The President doesn't want us to know how untrue that story is. But of course we know.

When I tell a bad story or any other writer tells a bad story there is no great harm done except, perhaps, to ourselves if a publisher won't publish it. But when the President tells a bad story, it is published all over the world. And it has immense consequences. For one thing, it creates other bad storytellers in the President's style, from Cabinet members who ignore the Geneva Conventions and sanction the unlawful interrogation of prisoners, down through the ranks to the American soldiers who, in the very same prison where Saddam Hussein tortured prisoners, have tortured and humiliated detainees, stuffed their heads in toilets to make them renounce their religion, and posed them naked with dog collars around their necks. And before you know it we are hearing from this President stories that are not true American stories, stories that are no longer our stories, stories that we turn away from because they are so un-American.

Pumping out the presidential stories is a whole stable of people writing in his name, a stable of empire-dreaming ideologists and oilmen for whom the thirteenth-century tribal idea of preemptive war seems the way to be a twenty-first-century American. Never mind that it has actually made us hated all over the world and expanded Al Qaeda's recruitment base, or that it has encouraged other countries similarly to abandon their diplomatic restraint. Never mind that it tears apart international understandings that were inching the world toward some hope of permanent universal détente, ecological sanity, and judicious means for the settlement of competing national interests.

Our government has imprisoned suspects without bringing charges against them or arranging for their trials. It is now legally empowered to conduct secret searches and surveillance of homes and offices of people who for any reason come under its suspicion. It may subpoena the public library or your uni-

[Exhortation]

# THIS VOTE'S FOR YOU

*From an email message sent on June 9 by eighteen-year-old Melissa Denton to about twenty of her friends. Her father, Mike Denton, is a trustee of the Board of Education in Linden, Michigan.*

Hey everyone!!!

If you are registered to vote, next Monday is the Linden Board Election and we all have to vote for John Walsh and Nancy Donlan . . . Not the Plumb/Wright assholes.

My Dad says that if they win he will let me have people over and he will buy all of us beer. I'm talking like 20 cases, people. Minimum.

(But don't tell him I told you because I think I am only supposed to use that as a last resort.)

But he will only do it if they win. So all of you vote for them because free beer is tight.

Thanks and love you all!

Melissa

P.S. And if you are wondering why the hell my Dad would care . . . It's because he's on the school board and he doesn't want to get stuck with pieces of shit.

versity library and demand to see what books you've been reading. And so with all the consequences of this President's bad stories, we have to ask ourselves: What is happening to us? What are we becoming? These are crucial questions because the total of this President's bad stories is beginning to sound like a deconstruction of the 228-year-old American story.

You've been concerned to pass your courses and get your degree, but now you have to understand that your own private concerns, your well-being, even your life's course, will be profoundly affected by the condition of the country you live in. And right now it is not a healthy condition. We are a deeply divided nation in danger of undergoing a profound change for the worse. Are you prepared to say that we can tolerate ourselves as anything other than what Abraham Lincoln called us—the last best hope of mankind? For it is not just our politicians who are given to write the story we live by. The genius of our democracy is that finally everyone writes its story. You will hear that to question authority is to aid terrorism. You will hear that to dissent is to signal weakness in the national resolve. Do not believe these stories. They are beneath contempt. You have been taught in your years here how to distinguish truth from cant. You have the means now to recognize the truth and to write it. Your minds are enlisted in the struggle for a human future and a society not in thrall to stupidity and terror. Your generation is as of this day entrusted with writing the American story. And do not delude yourselves, if you don't write it, someone else will write it for you.

[Commissions]

# IF MUSIC AND SWEET POETRY AGREE

*The following requests were submitted to "Songs To Wear Pants To," a website that creates made-to-order songs.*

If there were a character in a Broadway musical who gets suspended upside down above a shark tank and is forced under penalty of death to summarize the whole of world history in less than one minute and eleven seconds, I was just wondering what that would sound like.

Write a song about my wife, Freya, and how she always lies. When she relates stories I've told her, she always throws things in there I never said. It should be in her most hated genre, teen angst rock.

please make a song about cheese and how it is really good but sometimes too hot. so hot that it can burn the top of your mouth off!

Could you please make a Christmas song about falling down the stairs using only words that start with "P," "M," "B," and "S"? And maybe "E," too. Thanks!

I think you should write a song about a man ordering a burrito and being extremely intimidated by the size of it. The music should be Celtic techno, or any other blend of two genres that would not be caught eating a burrito together.

you should write a little love song with male and female vocals, both of which you should sing. the premise of this song being that girl loves boy because he knows how much milk and sugar she likes in her coffee. and boy loves girl because she likes zombies.

you should make a song about how awesome Superdeer is.

A song entirely composed of vowels. Aaaaaeeeeiiiiiiiiiioooooouuuuuuusometimesy. Either one long howl, or a death metal growl, or short staccato bursts of vowelness. Then, at the end, yell "VOWELTACULAR!"

Make a song about baking. Possibly the process of making cupcakes? Yes. Mention something about pink frosting 30 seconds into the song and sprinkles 60 seconds into the song. Please use a bongo to create the song, and if not a bongo then just bang on a pan. Since a song about just baking would be boring, also talk about smelly shoes!

I'm from Germany and I would love to hear a song in German. If you don't speak any German just sing some gibberish that sounds like German. But you should use the words "Vorsprung durch Technik," maybe to some smooth piano sounds.

I think you should create a song about badgers. There should be a background beat of someone repeating the word "badger" quite fast, an occasional mention of the word "mushroom," and something about a snake in there somewhere.

I bet you could make a killer song out of my lame boss! he's a bodybuilder, and he has an album full of pictures of himself from his competing days, and he's in a speedo and it's really disturbing and he shows it to everyone. he uses phrases like "on the juice" and "'roid rage" and "carbo load." he eats gross food all the time and always tells me what his body fat percentage is. he

[Portrait]

# YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND

I was with the mujahedeen, and the Russians did this. I was with the mujahedeen, and an enemy faction of mujahedeen did this. I was with the Russians, I was known to have assisted the Russians, I did informer's work for Babrak Karmal, my name is in the files if they haven't been destroyed, the names I gave are in the files, there are no more files, I stole bread for my starving family, I stole bread from a starving family, I profaned, betrayed, according to some stricture I erred and they chopped off the fingers of my hand. Look, look at my country, look at my Kabul, my city, what is left of my city. The streets are as bare as the mountains now, the buildings are as ragged as mountains and as bare and empty of life, there is no life here only fear, we do not live in the buildings now, we live in terror in the cellars in the caves in the mountains, only God can save us now, only order can save us now, only God's Law harsh and strictly administered can save us now, only The Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice can save us now, only terror can save us from ruin, only never-ending war, save us from terror and never-ending war, save my wife they are stoning my wife, they are chasing her with sticks, save my wife save my daughter from punishment by God, save us from God, from war, from exile, from oil exploration, from no oil exploration, from the West, from the children with rifles, carrying stones, only children with rifles, carrying stones, can save us now. You will never understand. It is hard, it was hard work to get into the U.K. I am happy here in the U.K. I am terrified I will be made to leave the U.K. I cannot wait to leave the U.K. I despise the U.K. I voted for John Major. I voted for Tony Blair. I did not, I cannot vote, I do not believe in voting, the people who ruined my hand were right to do so, they were wrong to do so, my hand is most certainly ruined, you will never understand.

Links WAY TOO MUCH. he says "basically" all the time when it doesn't even make sense to [illegible] times a sentence. no joke.

make a song about a polar bear fighting a unicorn, preferably early 80s rap.

My rabbit has eaten the last of the lettuce in the house and my mother will not go to the market until tomorrow. Please write him a cheering song and mention my name, Silvia, so he knows that I love him more than my brother. His name is Joe. The brother, not the rabbit. The rabbit's name is Poopie. He is the color of poo.

dear songmaker: please make an a cappella chant song about people who photocopy their body parts, with at least 14 layers of your voice.

Could you please make a song with spoons and about spoons?

I was wondering if you could make a song about a samurai flying on the back of a giant eagle? And if you could say "Ra-pa-pa-pa" really fast somewhere within it too.

[Ars Poetica]

# THE IRRESISTIBLE BEAUTY OF ALL THINGS

*From a lecture entitled "Imagination, Inspiration, Evasion" by Federico García Lorca, reconstructed and translated by Christopher Maurer from newspaper accounts published between 1928 and 1930. It appeared in issue 7 of* Jubilat *and is included in* Sebastian's Arrows: Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca, *published this Autumn by Swan Isle Press.*

In an intimate gathering at the Residencia de Estudiantes, the architect Le Corbusier once said that what he had best liked about Spain was the expression *dar la estocada*, to make a clean kill, because it expressed the intention of going directly to the subject and the yearning to master it rapidly, without pausing over what is merely accessory and decorative. I too believe in that doctrine, though, naturally, my sword is not a clean, agile one. The bull lies before us, and we must kill it. At least that is my intention.

Because I know how difficult this subject is, I am not trying to define, merely to emphasize. Don't ask me about truth or falsehood, because "poetic truth" is an expression that changes with the person to



COURTESY CYNTHIA BROAN, NEW YORK CITY AND GALERIE HOLTMANN, KÖLN

*"House of Light III," a photograph by Frank Brunner, can be viewed at Cynthia Broan, in New York City.*

whom it is applied. Light in Dante can be ugliness in Mallarmé. Furthermore, as everyone knows by now, one must *love* poetry. Poetry is like faith—it isn't meant to be understood but to be received in a state of grace. No one should say "this is clear," because poetry is obscure. And no one should say "this is obscure," because poetry is clear. What we must do is search out poetry energetically and virtuously so that it will surrender to us. But we need to have forgotten poetry completely before it can fall naked into our arms. What poetry cannot bear is indifference. Indifference is the devil's armchair. But it is indifference we hear babbling in the streets, dressed grotesquely in self-satisfaction and culture.

For me, imagination is synonymous with discovery. To imagine, to discover, to carry our bit of light to the living penumbra where all the infinite possibilities, forms, and numbers exist. I do not believe in creation but in discovery, and I don't believe in the seated artist but in the one who is walking the road. The imagination is a spiritual apparatus, a luminous explorer of the world it discovers. The imagination fixes and gives clear life to fragments of the invisible reality where man is stirring.

The imagination merely discovers things already created, it does not invent, and whenever it does so it is defeated by the beauty of reality. The imagination hunts for images using tried and true techniques of the hunt. The mechanics of poetic imagination are always the same: a concentration, a leap, a flight, a return with the treasure, and a classification and selection of what has been brought back. The poet dominates his imagination and sends it wherever he wants. When he is not happy with its services he punishes it and sends it back, just as the hunter punishes the dog who is too slow in bringing him the bird. Sometimes the hunt is splendid, but the most beautiful birds and the brightest lights almost always get away.

The imagination is limited by reality: one cannot imagine what does not exist. It needs objects, landscapes, numbers, planets, and it requires the purest sort of logic to relate those things to one another. The imagination hovers over reason the way fragrance hovers over a flower, wafted on the breeze but tied, always, to the ineffable center of its origin.

The poetic imagination travels and transforms things, giving them their purest mean-

pected. It was imagination that discovered the burning embers, without logic or sense, where one finds free, unrestrained inspiration.

poetry. He can, of course, produce poetic nique of verse that typical musical emotion of the Romantic, which falls short, almost always, of the deep meaning of the pure poet. But the imaginative poet cannot produce virginal, unrestrained poetic emotion, free of walls—round poetry with its own newly created laws. Imagination is poor, and the poetic imagination more so.

Visible reality, the facts of the world and of the human body, are much more full of subtle nuances, and are much more poetic than what imagination discovers. One notices this often in the struggle between scientific reality and imaginative myth, in which—thank God—science wins. For science is a thousand times more lyrical than any theogony

The human imagination invented giants in order to attribute to them the construction of great grottoes or enchanted cities. Later, reality taught us that those great caves are made by the drop of water. The pure, patient, eternal drop of water. In this case, as in many others, reality wins. After all, it is much more beautiful that a cave be a mysterious caprice of water—chained and ordered by eternal laws—than the whim of giants who have no other meaning than that of an explanation.

The daughter of the imagination—the logical and legitimate daughter—is the metaphor, which is sometimes born from a sudden stroke of intuition and sometimes brought to light by the slow anguish of forethought.

The poet strolls through his imagination, limited by it. He hears the flowing of great rivers. His forehead feels the cool of the reeds that tremble in the midst of nowhere. He wants to hear the dialogue of the insects beneath the boughs. He wants to penetrate the current of the sap in the dull silence of great tree trunks. He wants to understand the Morse alphabet spoken by the heart of the sleeping girl.

He wants. We all want. To do this is his sin to want. One shouldn't want, one should *love*. And so he fails. Because when he tries to express the poetic truth of any of these motifs, he will have to make use of plastic analogies that will never be sufficiently ex-

depths.

As long as he does not try to free himself from the world, the poet can live happily in his golden poverty. All the rhetorical systems, all the poetic schools in the world, from the Japanese on, have a lovely wardrobe of suns, moons, lilies, mirrors, and melancholy winds that can be used by all intelligences at all latitudes.

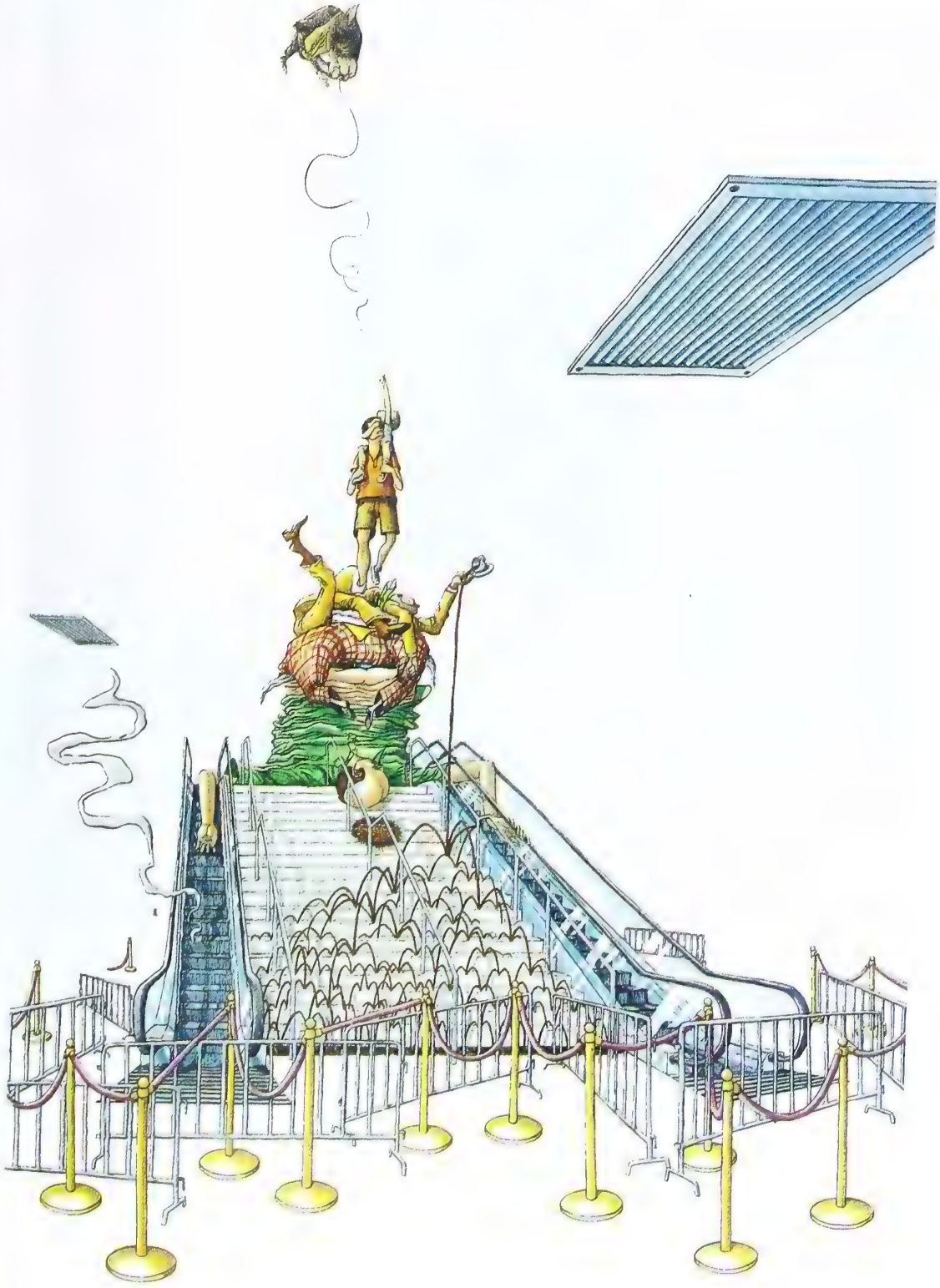
But the poet who wants to break free from the imagination, and not merely live on the images produced by real objects, stops dreaming and starts to desire. Then, when the limits of his imagination become unbearable and he wants to free himself from his enemy—the world—he passes from desire to love. He goes from imagination, which is a fact of the soul, to inspiration, which is a state of the soul. He goes from analysis to faith, and the poet, previously an explorer, is now a humble man who bears on his shoulders the irresistible beauty of all things.

Imagination assaults the theme furiously from all sides, but inspiration receives it suddenly and wraps it in subtle, pulsing light, like those huge carnivorous flowers that envelop the trembling bee and dissolve it in the acrid juice exuded by its merciless petals.

Imagination is intelligent, orderly, full of equilibrium, but inspiration is sometimes incongruent—it does not recognize man, and often it places a livid worm in the clear eyes of our muse. Just because it *wants* to, without offering an explanation. Imagination creates a poetic atmosphere, and inspiration invents the "poetic fact."

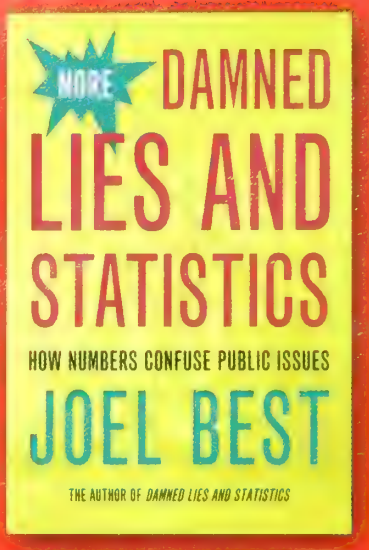
Just as poetical imagination has a human logic, poetic inspiration has a poetic one. Acquired technique and aesthetic postulates are no longer of any use. And just as imagination is a discovery, inspiration is a gift, an ineffable gift. It was Juan Larrea who said, "This, which comes to me because of my innocence."

The mission of the poet is just that—to give life (*animar*), in the exact sense of the word: to give soul. Because I am a true poet, and will remain so until my death, I will never stop flagellating myself with the disciplines, and never give up hope that someday my body will run with green or yellow blood. Anything is better than to remain seated in the window looking out on the same landscape. The light of any poet is contradiction. I haven't tried to force my position on anyone—that would be unworthy of poetry. Poetry doesn't need skilled practitioners, she needs lovers, and she lays down brambles and shards of glass for the hands that search for her with love.



Scale the Production, *by Daniel Heimbinder, was on display this summer at Clementine Gallery, in New York City.*

# EXPOSURES




## More Damned Lies and Statistics

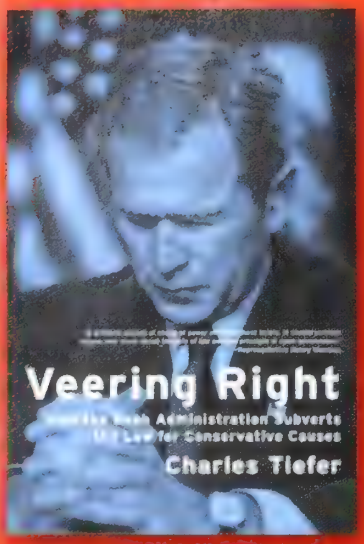
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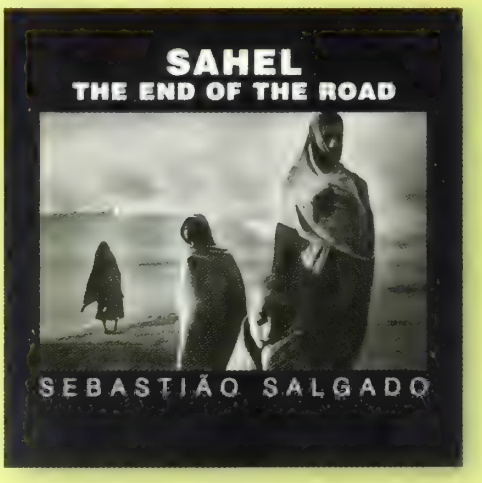
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# TENTACLES OF RAGE

## The Republican propaganda mill, a brief history

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*When, in all our history, has anyone with ideas so bizarre, so archaic, so self-confounding, so remote from the basic American consensus, ever got so far?*
—Richard Hofstadter

In company with nearly every other historian and political journalist east of the Mississippi River in the summer of 1964, the late Richard Hofstadter saw the Republican Party's naming of Senator Barry Goldwater as its candidate in that year's presidential election as an event comparable to the arrival of the Mongol hordes at the gates of thirteenth-century Vienna. The "basic American consensus" at the time was firmly liberal in character and feeling, assured of a clear majority in both chambers of Congress as well as a sympathetic audience in the print and broadcast press. Even the National Association of Manufacturers was still aligned with the generous impulse of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, accepting of the proposition, as were the churches and the universities, that government must do for people what people cannot do for themselves.*



And yet, seemingly out of nowhere and suddenly at the rostrum of the San Francisco Cow Palace in a roar of triumphant applause, here was a cowboy-hatted herald of enlightened selfishness threatening to sack the federal city of good intentions, declaring the American government the enemy of the American people, properly understood not as the guarantor of the country's freedoms but as a syndicate of quasi-communist bureaucrats poisoning the wells of commercial enterprise with "centralized planning, red tape, rules without responsibility, and regimentation without recourse." A band played "America the Beautiful," and in a high noon glare of klieg light the convention delegates beheld a militant captain of capitalist jihad ("Extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice!") known to favor the doctrines of forward deterrence and preemptive strike ("Let's lob a nuclear bomb into the men's room at the Kremlin"), believing that poverty was proof of bad character ("lazy, dole-happy people who want to feed on the fruits of somebody else's labor"), that the Democratic Party and the network news programs were under the direction of Marxist ballet dancers, that Mammon was another name for God.

The star-spangled oratory didn't draw much of a crowd on the autumn campaign trail. The electorate in 1964 wasn't interested in the threat of an apocalyptic future or the comforts of an imaginary past, and Goldwater's reactionary vision in the desert faded into the sunset of the November election won by Lyndon Johnson with 61 percent of the popular vote, the suburban sheriffs on their palomino ponies withdrawing to Scottsdale and Pasadena in the orderly and inoffensive manner of the Great Khan's horsemen retiring from the plains of medieval Europe.

* *With regard to the designation "liberal," the economist John K. Galbraith said in 1964, "Almost everyone now so describes himself." Lionel Trilling, the literary critic, observed in 1950 that "In the United States at this time, liberalism is not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition." He went on to say that "there are no conservative or reactionary ideas in general circulation," merely "irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."*

Illustrations by Tim Bower

Departed but not disbanded. As the basic American consensus has shifted over the last thirty years from a liberal to a conservative bias, so also the senator from Arizona has come to be seen as a prophet in the western wilderness, apostle of the rich man's dream of heaven that placed

**IN THE 1970S A CADRE OF ULTRACONSERVATIVE MILLIONAIRES BECAME BENT ON RESCUING THE COUNTRY FROM THE HIDEOUS GRASP OF SATANIC LIBERALISM**

Ronald Reagan in the White House in 1980 and provides the current Bush Administration with the platform on which the candidate was trundled into New York City this August with Arnold Schwarzenegger, the heavy law enforcement, and the paper elephants.* The speeches in Madison Square Garden affirmed the great truths now routinely preached from the pulpits of Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal*—government the problem, not the solution; the social contract a dead letter; the free market the answer to every maiden's prayer—and while listening to the hollow rattle of the rhetorical brass and tin, I remembered the question that Hofstadter didn't stay to answer. How did a set of ideas both archaic and

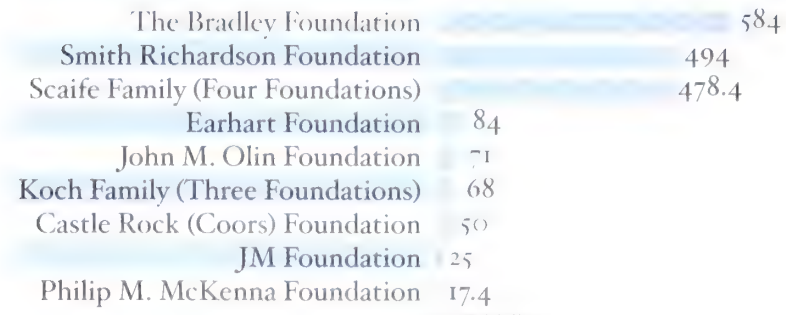
but are make its way into the center ring of the American political circus?

About the workings of the right-wing propaganda mills in Washington and New York I knew enough to know that the numbing of American political senses didn't happen by mistake, but it wasn't until I met Rob Stein, formerly a senior adviser to the chairman of the Democratic National Committee, that I came to fully appreciate the nature and the extent of the re-education program undertaken in the early 1970s by a cadre of ultraconservative and self-mythologizing millionaires bent on rescuing the country from the hideous grasp of Satanic liberalism. To a small group of Democratic activists meeting in New York City in late February, Stein had brought thirty-eight charts diagramming the organizational structure of the Republican "Message Machine," an octopus-like network of open and hidden microphones that he described as "perhaps the most potent, independent institutionalized apparatus ever assembled in a democracy to promote one belief system."

It was an impressive presentation, in large part because Stein didn't refer to anybody as a villain, never mentioned the word "conspiracy." A lawyer who also managed a private equity investment fund—i.e., a man unintimidated by spread sheets and indifferent to the seductions of the pious left—Stein didn't begrudge the manufacturers of corporatist agitprop the successful distribution of their product in the national market for the portentous catch-phrase and the camera-ready slogan. Having devoted several months to his search through the available documents he was content to let the facts speak for themselves—fifty funding agencies of different dimensions and varying degrees of ideological fervor, nominally philanthropic but zealous in their common hatred of the liberal enemy, disbursing the collective sum of roughly $3 billion over a period of thirty years for the fabrication of "irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas."

The effort had taken many forms—the publication of expensively purchased and cleverly pro-

## $2 BILLION ASSETS
## CONSERVATIVE FOUNDATIONS (2001 ASSETS)




*The rightward movement of the country's social and political center of gravity isn't a matter of opinion or conjecture. Whether compiled by Ralph Nader or by journalists of a conservative persuasion (most recently John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge in a book entitled* The Right Nation*) the numbers tell the same unambiguous story—one in five Americans willing to accept identity as a liberal, one in three preferring the term "conservative"; the American public content with lower levels of government spending and higher levels of economic inequality than those pertaining in any of the Western European democracies; the United States unique among the world's developed nations in its unwillingness to provide its citizens with a decent education or fully funded health care, 40 million Americans paid less than $10 an hour, 66 percent of the population earning less than $45,000 a year, 2 million people in prison, the majority of them black and Latino; the country's largest and most profitable corporations relieved of the obligation to pay an income tax; no politician permitted to stand for public office without first professing an ardent faith in God*

Charts based on research by Rob Ste

ed tracts (Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose*, rles Murray's *Losing Ground*, Samuel Hunton's *The Clash of Civilizations*), a steady flow ewsletters from more than 100 captive printpresses (among them those at The Heritage ndation, Accuracy in the Media, the Amern Enterprise Institute and the Center for the dy of Popular Culture), generous distribuns of academic programs and visiting profesships (to Harvard, Yale, and Stanford unisities), the passing along of sound-bite slanders Bill O'Reilly and Matt Drudge), the formuon of newspaper op-ed pieces (for the *San tonio Light* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* as l as for the *Sacramento Bee* and the *Washing- Times*). The prolonged siege of words had ved so successful in its result that on nearly ry question of foreign or domestic policy in s year's presidential campaign, the frame and ns of the debate might as well have been asbled in Taiwan by Chinese child labor work- from patterns furnished by the authors of xonMobil's annual report.

No small task and no mean feat, and as I tched Stein's diagrams take detailed form on omputer screen (the directorates of the Leadhip Institute and Capital Research Center all t identical with that of The Philanthropy undtable, Richard Mellon Scaife's money patched to the Federalist Society as well as *The American Spectator*), I was surprised to so many familiar names—publications to ich I'd contributed articles, individuals with om I was acquainted—and I understood that ein's story was one that I could corroborate, t with supplementary charts or footnotes but on the evidence of my own memory and observation.

The provenience of the Message Machine ein traced to the recognition on the part of e country's corporate gentry in the late 1960s at they lacked the intellectual means to comehend, much less quell or combat, the social and olitical turmoil then engulfing the whole of merican society, and if I had missed Goldwater's retelling of an apocalyptic future in the Cow alace, I remembered my own encounter with e fear and trembling of what was still known as The Establishment," four years later and 100 iles to the north at the July encampment of an Francisco's Bohemian Club. Over a period of ree weeks every summer, the 600-odd memers of the club, most of them expensive ornaents of the American haute bourgeoisie, invite n equal number of similarly fortunate guests to end as many days as their corporate calendars ermit within a grove of handsome redwood trees, ere to listen to the birdsong, interest one anther in various business opportunities, exchange misgivings about the restlessness of the deutschmark and the yen.

In the summer of 1968 the misgivings were indistinguishable from panic. Martin Luther King had been assassinated; so had Robert Kennedy, and everywhere that anybody looked the country's institutional infrastructure, also its laws, customs, best-loved truths, and fairy tales, seemed to be collapsing into anarchy and chaos—black people rioting in the streets of Los Angeles and Detroit, American soldiers killing their officers in Vietnam, longhaired hippies stoned on drugs or drowned in the bathtubs of Bel Air, shorthaired feminists playing with explosives instead of dolls,



the Scottsdale and Pasadena sheriffs' posses preparing their palomino ponies to stand firm in the face of an urban mob.

Historians revisiting in tranquillity the alarums and excursions of the Age of Aquarius know that Revolution Now was neither imminent nor likely—the economy was too prosperous, the violent gestures of rebellion contained within too small a demographic, mostly rich kids who could afford the flowers and the go-go boots—but in the hearts of the corporate chieftains wandering among the redwood trees in the Bohemian Grove in July 1968, the fear was palpable and genuine. The croquet lawn seemed to be sliding away beneath their feet, and although they knew they were in trouble, they didn't know why. Ideas apparently mattered, and words were maybe more important than they had guessed; unfortunately, they didn't have any. The American property-holding class-

and the beacons of conservative light shining through the liberal fog of the late 1960s didn't [illegible] as helpless as unarmed sheepherders surrounded by a Comanche war party on the old



Oklahoma frontier before the coming of the railroad and the six-gun.

The hope of their salvation found its voice in a 5,000-word manifesto written by Lewis Powell, a Richmond corporation lawyer, and circulated in August 1971 by the United States Chamber of Commerce under the heading *Confidential Memorandum; Attack on the American Free Enterprise System*. Soon to be appointed to the Supreme Court, lawyer Powell was a man well-known and much respected by the country's business community; within the legal profession he was regarded as a prophet. His heavy word of warning fell upon the legions of reaction with the force of Holy Scripture: "Survival of what we call the free enterprise system," he said, "lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation, in consistency of action over an indefinite period of years, in the scale of financing available only through joint effort, and in the political power available only through united action in national organizations."

The venture capital for the task at hand was provided by a small sewing circle of rich philanthropists—Richard Mellon Scaife in Pittsburgh, Lynde and Harry Bradley in Milwaukee, John Olin in New York City, the Smith Richardson family in North Carolina, Joseph Coors in Denver, David and Charles Koch in Wichita—who entertained visions of an America restored to the safety of its mythological past—small towns like those seen in prints by Currier and Ives, cheerful factory workers whistling while they worked, politicians as wise as Abraham Lincoln and as brave as Teddy Roosevelt, benevolent millionaires presenting Christmas turkeys to deserving elevator operators, the sins of the flesh deported to Mexico or France. Suspicious of any fact that they hadn't known before the age of six, the wealthy saviors of the Republic also possessed large reserves of paranoia, and if the world was going rapidly to rot (as any fool could plainly see) the fault was to be found in everything and anything tainted with a stamp of liberal origin—the news media and the universities, income taxes, Warren Beatty, transfer payments to the undeserving poor, restraints of trade, Jane Fonda, low interest rates, civil liberties for unappreciative minorities, movies made in Poland, public schools.

Although small in comparison with the sums distributed by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations, the money was ideologically sound, and it was put to work leveraging additional contributions (from corporations as well as from other like-minded foundations), acquiring radio stations, newspapers, and journals of opinion, bankrolling intellectual sweatshops for the making of political and socioeconomic theory. Joseph Coors established The Heritage Foundation with an initial gift of $250,000 in 1973, the sum augmented over the next few years with $900,000 from Richard Scaife; the American Enterprise Institute was revived and fortified in the late seventies with $6 million from the Howard Pew Freedom Trust; the Cato Institute was set up by the Koch family in 1977 with a gift of $500,000. If in 1971 the friends of American free enterprise could turn for comfort to no more than seven not very competent sources of inspiration, by the end of the decade they could look to eigh

* *The various philanthropic foundations under the control of the six families possess assets estimated in 2001 at $1.7 billion. Harry Bradley was an early and enthusiastic member of the John Birch Society; Koch Industries in the winter of 2000 agreed to pay $30 million (the largest civil fine ever imposed on a private American company under any federal environmental law) to settle claims related to 300 oil spills from its pipelines in six states.*

tional installations committed to "joint effort" "united action."* The senior officers of the une 500 companies meanwhile organized the iness Roundtable, providing it by 1979 with h endowment for the hiring of resident schol- loyal in their opposition to the tax and trust laws.

he quickening construction of Santa's work- ps outside the walls of government and the demy resulted in the increased production of phlets, histories, monographs, and back- nd briefings intended to bring about the ruin he liberal idea in all of its institutionalized ns—the demonization of the liberal press, the aragement of liberal sentiment, the destruc- of liberal education—and by the time Ronald gan arrived in triumph at the White House 980 the assembly lines were operating at full acity. Well in advance of inauguration day Christmas elves had churned out so much er that had they been told to do so, they could e shredded it into tickertape and welcomed new cowboy-hatted herald of enlightened ishness with a parade like none other ever be- e seen by man or beast. Unshredded, the pa- was the stuff of dreams from which was made *ndate for Leadership*, the "bible" presented by e Heritage Foundation to Mr. Reagan in the t days of his presidency with the ought that he might want to fol- y its architectural design for an nerica free at last from "the tyran- of the Left," rescued from the ngeons of "liberal fascism," once ain a theme park built by non- ion labor along the lines of Walt Disney's gardens of synthetic Eden.

Signs of the newly minted intel- tual dispensation began showing in the offices of *Harper's Magazine* 1973, the manuscripts invariably king the form of critiques of one or other of the absurdities then mak- g an appearance before the Wash- gton congressional committees or uring the New York literary scene ith Susan Sontag and Norman ailer. Over a period of several years e magazine published articles and says by authors later to become well-known ologists for the conservative creed, among them eorge Gilder, Michael Novak, William Tucker, and Philip Terzian; if their writing in the early seventies was remarkable both for its clarity and wit, it was because they chose topics of opportunity that were easy to find and hard to miss.

## THE PAMPHLETS, HISTORIES, AND BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS WERE INTENDED TO BRING ABOUT THE RUIN OF THE LIBERAL IDEA IN ALL ITS INSTITUTIONALIZED FORMS

The liberal consensus hadn't survived the loss of the Vietnam War. The subsequently sharp reduction of the country's moral and economic resources was made grimly apparent by the impeachment of Richard Nixon and the price of Arab oil, and it came to be understood that Roosevelt's New Deal was no longer on offer. Acting on generous impulse and sustained by the presumption of limitless wealth, the American people had enacted legislation reflecting their best hopes for racial equality and social justice (a.k.a. Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society"), but any further efforts at transformation clearly were going to cost a great deal more money than the voters were prepared to spend. Also a good deal more thought than the country's liberal-minded intelligentsia were willing to attempt or eager to provide. The universities chose to amuse themselves with the crossword puzzles of French literary theory, and in the New York media salons the standard-bearers of America's political conscience were content to rest upon what they took to be their laurels, getting by with the striking of noble poses (as friends of the earth or the Dalai Lama) and the expression of worthy emotions (on behalf of persecuted

### NATIONAL "THINK TANKS" (2001 BUDGETS)




*Paul Weyrich, the first director of The Heritage Foun- ition, and often described by his admirers as "the Lenin social conservatism," seldom was at a loss for a military nalogy: "If your enemy has weapons systems working nd is killing you with them, you'd better have weapons sys- ms of your own."*

fur-seals and oppressed women). The energies once contained within the nucleus of a potent idea escaped into the excitements of the style incorporated under the rubrics of Radical Chic, and the messengers bringing the good news of conservative reaction moved their gospel-singing tent show into an all but deserted public square.

## By the end of Reagan's second term the propaganda mills were spending $100 million a year on the manufacture and sale of their product

Their chief talents were those of the pedant and the critic, not those of the creative imagination, but they well understood the art of merchandising and the science of cross-promotion, and in the middle 1970s anybody wishing to appreciate the character and purpose of the emerging conservative putsch could find no better informant than Irving Kristol, then a leading columnist for the *Wall Street Journal*, the author of well-received books (*On the Democratic Idea in America* and *Two Cheers for Capitalism*), trusted counselor and adjunct sage at the annual meetings of the Business Roundtable. As a youth in the late 1930s, at a time when literary name and reputation accrued to the accounts of the *soi disant* revolutionary left, Kristol had proclaimed himself a disciple of Leon Trotsky, but then the times changed, the winds of fortune shifting from east to west, and after a stint as a CIA asset in the 1950s, he had carried his pens and papers into winter quarters on the comfortably upholstered bourgeois right.

On first meeting the gentleman at a literary dinner in New York's Century Club, I remember that I was as much taken by the ease and grace of his manner as I was impressed by his obvious intelligence. A man blessed with a sense of humor, his temperament and tone of mind more nearly resembling that of a sophisticated dealer in art and antiques than that of an academic scold, he praised *Harper's Magazine* for its publication of Tom Wolfe's satirical pieces, also for the prominence that it had given to the essays of Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and I was flattered by his inclination to regard me as an editor-of-promise who might be recruited to the conservative cause, presumably as an agent in place behind enemy lines. The American system of free enterprise, he said, was being attacked by the very people whom it most enriched—i.e., by the pampered children of privilege disturbing the peace of the Ivy League universities, doing lines of cocaine in Manhattan discotheques, making decadent movies in Hollywood—and the time had come to put an end to their dangerous and self-indulgent nonsense. Nobody under the age of thirty knew what anything cost, and even the senior faculty at Princeton had forgotten that it was none other than the great Winston Churchill who had said, "Cultured people are merely the glittering scum which floats upon the deep river of production."

In the course of our introductory conversation Kristol not only referred me to other old masters whom I might wish to re-read (among them Plutarch, Gibbon, and Edmund Burke) he also explained something of his technique as an intellectual entrepreneur. Despite the warning cries raised by a few prescient millionaires from the fashionable strongholds of the effete nate east, the full membership of the American oligarchy still wasn't alive to the threat of cultural insurrection, and in order to awaken the management to a proper sense of its dire peril Kristol had been traveling the circuit of the country's corporate boardrooms, soliciting contributions given in memory of Friedrich von Hayek, encouraging the automobile companies to withdraw their advertising budgets from any media outlet that declined to echo their social and political prejudices.

"Why empower your enemies?" he said. "Why throw pearls to swine?"

Although I didn't accept Kristol's invitation to what he called the "intellectual counter-revolution," I often ran across him during the next few years at various symposia addressed to the collapse of the nation's moral values, and I never failed to enjoy his company or his conversation. Among all the propagandists pointing out the conservative path to glory, Kristol seemed to me the brightest and the best, and I don't wonder that he eventually became one of the four or five principal shop stewards overseeing the labors of the Republican message machine.

It was at Kristol's suggestion that I met a number of the fund-raising people associated with the conservative program of political correctness, among them Michael Joyce, executive director in the late seventies of the Olin Foundation. We once traveled together on a plane returning to New York from a conference that

*Henry Ford II expressed a similar thought on resigning as a trustee of the Ford Foundation in late 1976. Given vent to his confusion, annoyance, and dismay, he took the trouble to write a letter to the staff of the foundation reminding them that they were associated with "a creature of capitalism." Conceding that the word might seem "shocking" to many of the people employed in the vineyards of philanthropy, Mr. Ford proceeded to his defense of the old ways and old order:*

*"I'm not playing the role of the hard-headed tycoon who thinks all philanthropoids are Socialists and all university professors are Communists. I'm just suggesting to the trustees and the staff that the system that makes the foundation possible very probably is worth preserving."*

yce had organized for a college in Michigan, and mewhere over eastern Ohio he asked whether night want to edit a new journal of cultural inion meant to rebut and confound the ravings *The New York Review of Books*. The proposition asn't one in which I was interested, but the rms of the offer—an annual salary of $200,000, be paid for life even in the event of my resig- ation or early retirement—spoke to the seri- usness of the rightist intent to corner and con- ol the national market in ideas.*

The work went more smoothly as soon as the eagan Administration had settled itself in Wash- gton around the fountains and reflecting pools federal patronage. Another nine right-think- g foundations established offices within a short istance of Capitol Hill or the Hay-Adams hotel nost prominent among them the Federalist So- iety and the Center for Individual Rights); more orporations sent more money; prices improved r ideological piecework (as much as $100,000 year for some of the brand-name scholars t Heritage and AEI), and eager converts the various sects of the conservative faith ere as thick upon the ground as maple eaves in autumn. By the end of Reagan's econd term the propaganda mills were pending $100 million a year on the nanufacture and sale of their roduct, invigorated by the sense hat once again it was morning in America and redoubling their ef- orts to transform their large store f irritable mental gestures into rightly packaged policy objec- ives—tort reform, school vouchers, less government, lower taxes, elimination of the abor unions, bigger military budgets, high- r interest rates, reduced environmental reg- ulation, privatization of social security, down- sized Medicaid and Medicare, more prisons, better surveillance, stricter law enforcement.

If production increased at a more hand- some pace than might have been dreamed of by Richard Scaife or hoped for by Irving Kristol, it was because the project had been blessed by Almighty God. The Christian right had come into the corporate fold in the late 1970s. Abandoning the alliance formed with the con- science of the liberal left during the Great De- pression (the years of sorrow and travail when money was not yet another name for Jesus), the merchants of spiritual salvation had come to see that their interests coincided with those of the in- surance companies and the banks. The American equestrian classes were welcome to believe that slack-jawed dope addicts had fomented the cul- tural insurrection of the 1960s; Jerry Falwell knew that it had been the work of Satan, Satan him- self and not one of his students at the Universi- ty of California, who had loosed a plague of gui- tarists upon the land, tempted the news media to the broadcast of continuous footage from Sodom and Gomorrah, impregnated the schools with indecent interpretations of the Bible, which then gave birth to the monster of multiculturalism that devoured the arts of learning. Together with Paul Weyrich at The Heritage Foundation, Fal- well sponsored the formation of the Moral Ma- jority in 1979, at about the same time and in much the same spirit that Pat Robertson, the Christian televangelist, sent his congregation a fund-raising letter saying that feminists encour- age women to "leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." Before Ronald Reagan was elected to a second term the city of God signed a nonaggression pact with the temple of Mam- mon, their combined forces waging what came to be known as "The Culture War."

The Cold War against the Russians was fad- ing into safe and nostalgic memory, and the tellers of the great American fairy tale (the one about the precious paradise ever in need of an in- vincible defense) found themselves in pressing need of other antagonists to take the place of the grim and harmless ogre in the northern snow.

**$300M CONSERVATIVE MESSAGE MACHINE**

**MASS MEDIA DISTRIBUTION**

- **TELEVISION**
  - Pat Robertson's *700 Club*
  - Fox News Channel
  - MSNBC's *Scarborough Country*
  - Oliver North's *War Stories*
- **RADIO**
  - *The Rush Limbaugh Show*
  - *The Cal Thomas Commentary*
  - *Radio America*
- **PUBLISHING**
  - Eagle Publishing, Inc.
- **NEWSPAPERS**
  - *The Washington Times*
  - *The Wall Street Journal*
- **WEBSITES**
  - Townhall.com
  - AnnCoulter.com

* *The proposed journal appeared in 1982 as* The New Criterion, *promoted as a "staunch defender" of high culture, "an articulate scourge of artistic mediocrity and intellectual mendacity wherever they are found." Joyce later took over direction of the Bradley Foundation, where he proved to be as deft as Weyrich and Kristol at what the movement conservatives liked to call the wondrous alchemy of turning intellect into influence.*



lites over Leipzig and Sevastopol were reassigned stations over metropolitan Detroit and the Hollywood studios filming *Dynasty* and *Dallas*. Within a matter of months the conservative committees of public safety rounded up as suspects a motley crowd of specific individuals and general categories of subversive behavior and opinion—black male adolescents as well as elderly female Buddhists, the *New York Times*, multiculturalists of all descriptions, the 1960s, welfare mothers, homosexuals, drug criminals, illegal immigrants, performance artists. Some enemies of the state were easier to identify than others, but in all instances the reactionary tellers of the tale relied on images seen in dreams or Arnold Schwarzenegger movies rather than on the lessons of their own experience.

For a few years I continued to attend convocations sponsored by the steadily proliferating agencies of the messianic right, but although the discussions were held in increasingly opulent settings—the hotel accommodations more luxurious, better food, views of the mountains as well as

by 1985 I could no longer stomach
the monotonous antiphony of the cant. With the co
power of the Reagan Administration n
of the people on the podium or the tennis co
were safely enclosed within the perimeters of
thodox opinion and government largesse,
yet they persisted in casting themselves as rel
against "the system," revolutionary idealists
ing hunted down like dogs by a vicious and
active liberal prosecution. The pose was as lu
crous as it was false. The leftist impulse had be
dead for ten years, ever since the right-wing De
ocrats in Congress had sold out the liberal p
folio of President Jimmy Carter and revised
campaign-finance laws to suit the convenience
their corporate patrons. Nor did the news me
present an obstacle. By 1985 the *Wall Street Jo*
*nal* had become the newspaper of record m
widely read by the people who made the decisi
about the country's economic policy; the leadi
editorialists in the *New York Times* (A. M. Ros
thal, William Safire) as well as in the *Washingt*
*Post* (George Will, Richard Harwood, Meg Gree
field) ably defended the interests of the stat
quo; the vast bulk of the nation's radio talk sho
(reaching roughly 80 percent of the audience)
flected a conservative bias, as did all but one
two of the television talk shows permitted to e
gage political topics on PBS. In the pages of t
smaller journals of opinion (*National Revie*
*Commentary*, *The American Spectator*, *The N*
*tional Interest*, *The New Criterion*, *The Public I*
*terest*, *Policy Review*, etc.) the intellectual déc
much of it paid for by the Olin and Scaife fou
dations, was matched to the late-Victorian tast
of Rudyard Kipling and J. P. Morgan. The voi
es of conscience that attracted the biggest crow
on the nation's lecture circuit were those th
spoke for one or another of the parties of th
right, and together with the chorus of religio
broadcasts and pamphlets (among them P
Robertson's *700 Club* and the publications und
the direction of Jerry Falwell and the Reverer
Sun Myung Moon), they enveloped the count
in an all but continuous din of stereophoni
right-wing sound.

The facts seldom intruded upon the medit
tions of the company seated poolside at the co
ferences and symposia convened to bemoa
America's fall from grace, and I found it increa
ingly depressing to listen to prerecorded truth
dribble from the mouths of writers once willin
to risk the chance of thinking for themselve
Having exchanged intellectual curiosity for id
ological certainty, they had forfeited their pow
ers of observation as well as their senses of humo
no longer courageous enough to concede the po
sibility of error or enjoy the play of the imagina
tion, they took an interest only in those idea
that could be made to bear the weight of solem

trine, and they cried up the horrors of the ure war because their employers needed an al- or the disappearances of the country's civil lib- es and a screen behind which to hide the pri- ization (a.k.a. the theft) of its common perty—the broadcast spectrum as well as the ber, the water, and the air, the reserves of owledge together with the mineral deposits i the laws. Sell the suckers on the notion that ir "values" are at risk (abortionists escaping the s of the Massachusetts state police, pornogra- ers and cosmetic surgeons busily at work in Angeles, farm families everywhere in the ddle West becoming chattels of the welfare te) and maybe they won't notice that their kets have been picked.

So many saviors of the republic were raising alarm of culture war in the middle eighties t I now can't remember whether it was Bob tley writing in the *Wall Street Journal* or William nnett speaking from his podium at the National dowment for the Humanities who said that at le University the students were wallowing in the s of sex, drugs, and Karl Marx, disporting themves on the New Haven green in the reckless nner of nymphs and satyrs on a Grecian urn. I remember that at one of the high-end policy intutes in Manhattan I heard the tale told by Norn Podhoretz, then the editor at *Commentary*, the thor of several contentious books *Making It* and *Why We Were in etnam*), and a rabid propagandist r all things anti-liberal. What he d to say about Yale was absurd, hich I happened to know because at same season I was teaching a minar at the college. More than alf the number of that year's graduating seniors had applied for work the First Boston Corporation, nd most of the students whom I'd ad the chance to meet were so usy finding their way around the Monopoly board of the standard merican success (figuring the anles of approach to business school, dding to the network of contacts n their Filofaxes) that they didn't ave the time to waste on sexual igressions either literal or figurative. When I attempted to explain the circumtance to Podhoretz, he wouldn't hear of it. Not nly was I misinformed, I was a liberal and therore both a liar and a fool. He hadn't been in New Haven in twenty years, but he'd read William F. Buckley's book (*God and Man at Yale*, published in 1951), and he knew (because the judgnent had been confirmed by something he'd been old by Donald Kagan in 1978) that the college was a sinkhole of depraved sophism. He knew it for a fact, knew it in the same way that Jerry Falwell knew that it was Satan who taught Barbra Streisand how to sing.

If Kristol was the most engaging of the agents provocateur whom I'd encountered on the conservative lecture circuit in the 1980s, Podhoretz was the dreariest—an apparatchik in the old Soviet sense of the word who believed everything he wished to prove and could prove everything he wished to believe, bringing his patrons whichever words might serve or please, anxious to secure a place near or at the boot of power. Unfortunately it was Podhoretz, not Kristol, who exemplified the character and tone of mind that edged the American conservative consensus ever further to the right during the decade of the 1990s.

**IN THE ABSENCE OF ENEMIES ABROAD, THE PROTECTORS OF THE AMERICAN DREAM BEGAN TO LOOK FOR DOMESTIC SIGNS OF MORAL WEAKNESS**

The networks of reactionary opinion once again increased their rates of production, several additional foundations recruited to the cause, numerous activist organizations coming on line, together with new and improved media outlets (most notably Rupert Murdoch's Fox News and *Weekly Standard*) broadcasting the gospels according to saints Warren Harding and William McKinley. By 1994 the Conservative Political Action Conference was attracting as many as 4,000 people, half of them college students, to its annual weekend in Arlington, Virginia, there to listen to the heroes of the hour (G. Gordon Liddy, Ralph Reed, Oliver North) speak from stages wrapped in American flags. Americans

**STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS (2001 ESTIMATES)**



for Tax Reform under the directi[illegible] Norquist declared it [illegible] federal government to a size small en[illegible] drown," like one of the long-lost hippies in Bel Air, "in a bathtub."

Although as comfortably at home on Capitol Hill as in the lobbies of the corporate law firms on

**THE CONTRACT WITH AMERICA PROVIDED THE TERMS OF ENLIGHTENED SELFISHNESS THAT SHAPE AND INSPIRE THE POLICIES OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION**

K Street, and despite their having learned to suck like newborn lambs at the teats of government patronage (Kristol's son, William, serving as public-relations director to Vice President Dan Quayle; Podhoretz's son-in-law, Elliot Abrams, a highly placed official within the Reagan Administration subsequently indicted for criminal misconduct), the apologists for the conservative cause continued to pose as embattled revolutionaries at odds with the "Tyranny of the Left." The pretense guaranteed a steady flow of money from their corporate sponsors, and the unexpected election of Bill Clinton in 1992 offered them yet another chance to stab the corpse of the liberal Goliath. The smearing of the new president's name and reputation began as soon as he committed the crime of entering the White House. *The American Spectator*, a monthly journal financed by Richard Scaife, sent its scouts west into Arkansas to look for traces of Clinton's semen on the pine trees and the bar stools. It wasn't long before Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr undertook his obsessive inspection of the president's bank rec[illegible] soul, and penis. Summoning witnesses with the m[illegible] of a suburban Savonarola, Starr set forth [illegible] exploration of the Ozark Mountains, questioning [illegible] natives about wooden Indians and par[illegible] women. For four years he camped in the wilder[illegible] and even after he was allowed to examine Mo[illegible] ca Lewinsky's lingerie drawer, his search for [illegible] weapon of mass destruction proved as futile a[illegible] one more recently conducted in Iraq.

Although unable to match Starr's prim [illegible] righteousness, Newt Gingrich, the Republi[illegible] congressman from Georgia elected speaker of [illegible] House in 1995, presented himself as another ch[illegible] pion of virtue (a self-proclaimed "Teacher of [illegible] Rules of Civilization") willing to lead the Am[illegible] ican people out of the desolation of a liberal wi[illegible] land. Like Starr and Podhoretz (also like the ne[illegible] casters who now decorate the right-wing televi[illegible] studios), Gingrich had a talent for bearing grud[illegible] During his sixteen years in Congress he had [illegible] quired a reputation (not undeserved) for be[illegible] nasty, brutish, and short, eventually coming [illegible] stand as the shared and shining symbol of [illegible] sentiment that bound together the several par[illegible] of the disaffected right—the Catholic conser[illegible] tives with the Jewish neoconservatives, the [illegible] ertarians with the authoritarians, the evang[illegible] cal nationalists with the paranoid monetari[illegible] Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition with [illegible] friends of the Ku Klux Klan. Within a few mon[illegible] of his elevation to the speaker's chair, Gingrich [illegible] stowed on his fellow-plaintiffs his Contract w[illegible] America, a plan for rooting out the last vesti[illegible] of liberal heresy in the mine[illegible] government. As mean-spiri[illegible] in its particulars as the M[illegible] date for Leadership handed [illegible] Ronald Reagan in 1980, t[illegible] contract didn't become la[illegible] but it has since provided t[illegible] terms of enlightened selfis[illegible] ness that shape and inspire t[illegible] policies of the current Bu[illegible] Administration.

During the course of t[illegible] 1990s I did my best to ke[illegible] up with the various lines [illegible] grievance developing with[illegible] the several sects of the co[illegible] servative remonstrance, b[illegible] although I probably read [illegible] many as 2,000 presumab[illegible] holy texts (Peggy Noonan[illegible] newspaper editorials a[illegible] David Gelernter's magazi[illegible] articles as well as the solil[illegible] quies of Rush Limbaugh and the sermons of Robe[illegible] Bork), I never learned how to make sense of t[illegible] weird and too numerous inward contradiction

## EIGHT INFLUENTIAL BOOKS AND THE FOUNDATIONS WHO SPONSORED THEM

*Free to Choose*
Milton Friedman
Scaife Foundation
Olin Foundation

*The Naked Public Square*
Richard John Neuhaus
Lilly Endowment
Bradley Foundation
Olin Foundation

*The Dream and the Nightmare*
Myron Magnet
Scaife Foundation

*Losing Ground*
Charles Murray
Olin Foundation
Smith Richardson Foundation

*The Clash of Civilizations*
Samuel Huntington
Bradley Foundation
Smith Richardson Foundation

*Illiberal Education*
Dinesh D'Souza
Olin Foundation

*Politics, Markets & America's Schools*
John E. Chubb
and Terry M. Moe
Olin Foundation

*The Tragedy of American Compassion*
Marvin Olasky
Bradley Foundation

does one reconcile the demand for small rnment with the desire for an imperial army, y the phrases "personal initiative" and "self- nce" to corporation presidents utterly de- lent on the federal subsidies to the banking, munications, and weapons industries, square alk of "civility" with the strong-arm methods enneth Starr and Tom DeLay, match the nhearted currencies of "conservative com- ion" with the cold cruelty of "the unfettered market," know that human life must be saved n abortionists in Boston but not from cruise siles in Baghdad? In the glut of paper I could no unifying or fundamental principle except rtain belief that money was good for rich ple and bad for poor people. It was the only nt on which all the authorities agreed, and no tter where the words were coming from (a re- t on federal housing, an essay on the payment Social Security, articles on the sorrow of the ns or the wonder of the U.S. Navy) the authors ariably found the same abiding lesson in the —money ennobles rich people, making them ng as well as wise; money corrupts poor people, king them stupid as well as weak.

But if a set of coherent ideas was hard to find all the sermons from the mount, what was not rd to find was the common tendency to be- ve in some form of transcendent truth. A reli- us as opposed to a secular way of thinking. od versus Evil, right or wrong, saved or damned, th us or against us, and no light-minded tri- g with doubt or ambiguity. Or, more plainly and a young disciple of Ludwig Von Mises had said, ng ago in the 1980s in one of the hospitality tents t up to welcome the conservative awakening a conference on a beach at Hilton Head, "Our ople deal in absolutes."

Just so, and more's the pity. In place of in- lligence, which might tempt them to consort ith wicked or insulting questions for which ey don't already possess the answers, the par- es of the right substitute ideology, which, al- hough sometimes archaic and bizarre, is al- ays virtuous.

Virtuous, but not necessarily the best means vailable to the running of a railroad or a war. The ebacle in Iraq, like the deliberate impoverish- ent of the American middle class, bears witness o the shoddiness of the intellectual infrastructure n which a once democratic republic has come o stand. Morality deemed more precious than lib- rty; faith-based policies and initiatives ordained uperior to common sense.

As long ago as 1964 even William F. Buckley understood that the thunder on the conservative right amounted to little else except the sound and fury of middle-aged infants banging silver spoons, demanding to know why they didn't have more—more toys, more time, more soup; when Buckley was asked that year what the country could expect if it so happened that Goldwater was elected president, he said, "That might be a serious problem." So it has proved, if not under the baton of the senator from Arizona then under the direction of his ideologically correct heirs and assigns. An opinion poll taken in 1964 showed 62 percent of the respondents trusting the government to do the right thing; by 1994 the number had dwindled to 19 percent. The measure can be taken as a tribute to the success of the Republican propaganda mill that for the last forty years has been grinding out the news that all government is bad, and that the word "public," in all its uses and declensions (public service, citizenship, public health, community, public park, commonwealth, public school, etc.), connotes inefficiency and waste.



The dumbing down of the public discourse follows as the day the night, and so it comes as no surprise that both candidates in this year's presidential election present themselves as embodiments of what they call "values" rather than as the proponents of an idea. Handsome images consistent with those seen in Norman Rockwell's paintings or the prints of Currier and Ives, suitable for mounting on the walls of the American Enterprise Institute, or in one of the manor houses owned by Richard Mellon Scaife, maybe somewhere behind a library sofa or over the fireplace in a dining room, but certainly in a gilded frame. ■




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# BAGHDAD YEAR ZERO

## Pillaging Iraq in pursuit of a neocon utopia

*By Naomi Klein*

It was only after I had been in Baghdad for a month that I found what I was looking for. I had traveled to Iraq a year after the war began, at the height of what should have been a construction boom, but after weeks of searching I had not seen a single piece of heavy machinery apart from tanks and Humvees. Then I saw it: a construction crane. It was big and yellow and impressive, and when I caught a glimpse of it around a corner in a busy shopping district I thought that I was finally about to witness some of the reconstruction I had heard so much about. But as I got closer I noticed that the crane was not actually rebuilding anything—not one of the bombed-out government buildings that still lay in rubble all over the city, nor one of the many power lines that remained in twisted heaps even as the heat of summer was starting to bear down. No, the crane was hoisting a giant billboard to the top of a three-story building. SUNBULAH: HONEY 100% NATURAL, made in Saudi Arabia.




SUNBULAH HONEY BILLBOARD, BAGHDAD

Seeing the sign, I couldn't help but think about something Senator John McCain had said back in October. Iraq, he said, is "a huge pot of honey that's attracting a lot of flies." The flies McCain was referring to were the Halliburtons and Bechtels, as well as the venture capitalists who flocked to Iraq in the path cleared by Bradley Fighting Vehicles and laser-guided bombs. The honey that drew them was not just no-bid contracts and Iraq's famed oil wealth but the myriad investment opportunities offered by a country that had just been cracked wide open after decades of being sealed off, first by the nationalist economic policies of Saddam Hussein, then by asphyxiating United Nations sanctions.

Looking at the honey billboard, I was also reminded of the most common explanation for what has gone wrong in Iraq, a complaint echoed by everyone from John Kerry to Pat Buchanan: Iraq is mired in blood and deprivation because George W. Bush didn't have "a postwar plan." The only problem with this theory is that it isn't true. The Bush Administration did have a plan for what it would do after the war; put simply, it was to lay out as much honey as possible, then sit back and wait for the flies.

The honey theory of Iraqi reconstruction stems from the most cherished belief of the war's ideological architects: that greed is good. Not good just for them and their friends but good for humanity, and certainly good for Iraqis. Greed creates profit, which creates growth, which creates jobs and products and services and everything else anyone could possibly need or want. The role of good government, then, is to create the optimal conditions for corporations to pursue their bottomless greed, so that they in turn can meet the

*Naomi Klein is the author of* No Logo *and writer/producer of* The Take, *a new documentary on Argentina's occupied factories.*

Photographs © Andrew Stern/Andrew Stern.com

ly brief — of suspended animation, a

moment the source is far more open to suggestion, far likelier to comply." A similar theory applies to

scribe the rapid implementation of free-market reforms imposed on Chile in the wake of General Augusto Pinochet's coup. The theory is that if economic "adjustments" are brought

IRAQ WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A TEMPLATE SHOWCASE FOR LAISSEZ-FAIRE ECONOMICS, A UTOPIA SUCH AS THE WORLD HAD NEVER SEEN

in rapidly and in the aftermath of a seismic social disruption like a war, a coup, or a government collapse, the population will be so stunned, and so preoccupied with the daily pressures of survival, that it too will go into suspended animation, unable to resist. As Pinochet's finance minister, Admiral

declared, "The dog's tail must be cut off in one chop."

In essence

in Iraq and in keeping with the belief that private companies are more suited than governments for virtually everything, the White House decided to

state-dominated economy. Two

handed out to a private company, to

Like

company (which typically

military onslaught were even extinguished, Bremer unleashed his shock therapy, pushing through more wrenching changes in one sweltering summer than the International Monetary Fund has managed to enact over three decades in Latin America. Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and former chief economist at the World Bank, described Bremer's reforms as "an even more radical form of shock therapy than pursued in the former Soviet world."

The tone of Bremer's tenure was set

he had lost many across the

he fired 500,000 state workers,

most of them soldiers, but also

doctors, nurses, teachers, publishers, and printers. Next, he

flung open the country's borders

to absolutely unrestricted imports:

no tariffs, no duties, no inspections, no taxes. Iraq, Bremer declared

two weeks after he arrived,

was "open for business."

One month later, Bremer unveiled

the centerpiece of his reforms. Before

the invasion, Iraq's non-oil-related

economy had been dominated by

state-owned companies, which produced everything from cement to paper to washing machines. In June

Bremer flew to an economic summit

and announced that these firms

would be privatized immediately. "Ninety

state enterprises and

private hands," he said, "is essential

for Iraq's economic recovery." It would be the largest state liquidation since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

But Bremer's economic engineering

in September

to entice foreign investors to come to

Iraq, he enacted a radical set of laws

unprecedented in their generosity

traditional expectations. There was

Order 37, which lowered Iraq's

rate to a roughly 40 percent

to a flat 15 percent. There was Order

that allowed foreign companies

to own 100 percent of Iraqi assets in

sale of the nation's resources, sector

Even boasting investors could take

percent of the profits they made in

Iraq and bring the country day one

to be reopened to business and the

would be taxed at a low

Order 39

and

ined of Saddam Hussein's economic policies was a law restricting trade ions and collective bargaining.

If these policies sound familiar, it's cause they are the same ones multitionals around the world lobby for m national governments and in international trade agreements. But ile these reforms are only ever ened in part, or in fits and starts, Brem delivered them all, all at once. ernight, Iraq went from being the ost isolated country in the world to being, on paper, its widest-open market.

At first, the shock-therapy theo- seemed to hold: Iraqis, reeling from olence both military and economic, ere far too busy staying alive to ount a political response to Bremer's mpaign. Worrying about the privaation of the sewage system was an imaginable luxury with half the popation lacking access to clean drinkg water; the debate over the flat tax ould have to wait until the lights ere back on. Even in the internaonal press, Bremer's new laws, though dical, were easily upstaged by more amatic news of political chaos and ing crime.

Some people were paying attention, course. That autumn was awash in ebuilding Iraq" trade shows, in Washgton, London, Madrid, and Amman. *he Economist* described Iraq under remer as "a capitalist dream," and a urry of new consulting firms were unched promising to help companies et access to the Iraqi market, their oards of directors stacked with wellonnected Republicans. The most ominent was New Bridge Strategies, arted by Joe Allbaugh, former Bush-heney campaign manager. "Getting ne rights to distribute Procter & Gamle products can be a gold mine," one the company's partners enthused. One well-stocked 7-Eleven could nock out thirty Iraqi stores; a Wal-Mart could take over the country."

Soon there were rumors that a McDonald's would be opening up in owntown Baghdad, funding was almost in place for a Starwood luxury otel, and General Motors was planing to build an auto plant. On the nancial side, HSBC would have ranches all over the country, Citigroup was preparing to offer substantial loans guaranteed against future sales of Iraqi oil, and the bell was going to ring on a New York–style stock exchange in Baghdad any day.

In only a few months, the postwar plan to turn Iraq into a laboratory for the neocons had been realized. Leo Strauss may have provided the intellectual framework for invading Iraq preemptively, but it was that other University of Chicago professor, Milton Friedman, author of the anti-government manifesto *Capitalism and Freedom*, who supplied the manual for what to do once the country was safely in America's hands. This represented an enormous victory for the most ideological wing of the Bush Administration. But it was also something more: the culmination of two interlinked power struggles, one among Iraqi exiles advising the White House on its postwar strategy, the other within the White House itself.

As the British historian Dilip Hiro has shown, in *Secrets and Lies: Operation 'Iraqi Freedom' and After*, the Iraqi exiles pushing for the invasion were divided, broadly, into two camps. On one side were "the pragmatists," who favored getting rid of Saddam and his immediate entourage, securing access to oil, and slowly introducing free-market reforms. Many of these exiles were part of the State Department's Future of Iraq Project, which generated a thirteen-volume report on how to restore basic services and transition to democracy after the war. On the other side was the "Year Zero" camp, those who believed that Iraq was so contaminated that it needed to be rubbed out and remade from scratch. The prime advocate of the pragmatic approach was Iyad Allawi, a former high-level Baathist who fell out with Saddam and started working for the CIA. The prime advocate of the Year Zero approach was Ahmad Chalabi, whose hatred of the Iraqi state for expropriating his family's assets during the 1958 revolution ran so deep he longed to see the entire country burned to the ground—everything, that is, but the Oil Ministry, which would be the nucleus of the new Iraq, the cluster of cells from which an entire nation would grow. He called this process "de-Baathification."



AN IRAQI TELECOMMUNICATIONS CENTER, BOMBED DURING THE WAR

A parallel battle between pragmatists and true believers was being waged within the Bush Administration. The pragmatists were men like Secretary of State Colin Powell and General Jay Garner, the first U.S. envoy to postwar Iraq. General Garner's plan was straightforward enough: fix the infrastructure, hold quick and dirty elections, leave the shock therapy to the International Monetary Fund, and concentrate on securing U.S. military

bases on the model of the Philippines. "I think we should look right now at Iraq as our coaling station in the Middle East," he told the BBC. He also paraphrased T. E. Lawrence, saying, "It's better for them to do it imperfectly than for us to do it for them perfectly." On the other side was the



A BLAST WALL TO PROTECT AGAINST EXPLOSIONS

usual cast of neoconservatives: Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (who lauded Bremer's "sweeping reforms" as "some of the most enlightened and inviting tax and investment laws in the free world"), Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and, perhaps most centrally, Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith. Whereas the State Department had its Future of Iraq report, the neocons had USAID's contract with Bearing Point to remake Iraq's economy: in 108 pages, "privatization" was mentioned no fewer than fifty-one times. To the true believers in the White House, General Garner's plans for postwar Iraq seemed hopelessly unambitious. Why settle for a mere coaling station when you can have a model free market? Why settle for the Philippines when you can have a beacon unto the world?

The Iraqi Year Zeroists made natural allies for the White House neoconservatives: Chalabi's seething hatred of the Baathist state fit nicely with the neocons' hatred of the state in general, and the two agendas effortlessly merged. Together, they came to imagine the invasion of Iraq as a kind of Rapture: where the rest of the world saw death, they saw birth—a country redeemed through violence, cleansed by fire. Iraq wasn't being destroyed by cruise missiles, cluster bombs, chaos, and looting; it was being born again. April 9, 2003, the day Baghdad fell, was Day One of Year Zero.

While the war was being waged, it still wasn't clear whether the pragmatists or the Year Zeroists would be handed control over occupied Iraq. But the speed with which the nation was conquered dramatically increased the neocons' political capital, since they had been predicting a "cakewalk" all along. Eight days after George Bush landed on that aircraft carrier under a banner that said MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, the President publicly signed on to the neocons' vision for Iraq to become a model corporate state that would open up the entire region. On May 9, Bush proposed the "establishment of a U.S.-Middle East free trade area within a decade"; three days later, Bush sent Paul Bremer to Baghdad to replace Jay Garner, who had been on the job for only three weeks. The message was unequivocal: the pragmatists had lost; Iraq would belong to the believers.

A Reagan-era diplomat turned entrepreneur, Bremer had recently proven his ability to transform rubble into gold by waiting exactly one month after the September 11 attacks to launch Crisis Consulting Practice, a security company selling "terrorism risk insurance" to multinationals. Bremer had two lieutenants on the economic front: Thomas Foley and Michael Fleischer, the heads of "private sector development" for the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Foley is a Greenwich, Connecticut, multimillionaire, a longtime friend of the Bush family and a Bush-Cheney campaign "pioneer" who had described Iraq as a modern California "gold rush." Fleischer, a venture capitalist, is the brother of former White House spokesman Ari Fleischer. Neither man had any high-level diplomatic experience and both use the term corporate "turnaround" specialist to describe what they do. According to Foley, this uniquely qualified them to manage Iraq's economy because it was "the mother of all turnarounds."

Many of the other CPA postings were equally ideological. The Green Zone, the city within a city that houses the occupation headquarters in Saddam's former palace, was filled with Young Republicans straight out of the Heritage Foundation, all of them given responsibility they could never have dreamed of receiving at home. Jay Hallen, a twenty-four-year-old who had applied for a job at the White House, was put in charge of launching Baghdad's new stock exchange. Scott Erwin, a twenty-one-year-old former intern to Dick Cheney, reported in an email home that "I am assisting Iraq in the management of finances and budgeting for the domestic security forces." The college senior's favorite job before this one? "My time as an ice-cream truck driver." In those early days, the Green Zone felt a bit like the Peace Corps, for people who think the Peace Corps is a communist plot. There was a chance to sleep on cots, wear army boots, and cry "incoming"—and while being guarded around the clock by real soldiers.

The teams of KPMG accountants, investment bankers, think-tank lifers, and Young Republicans that populated the Green Zone have much in common with the IMF missions that re-

range the economies of developing ountries from the presidential suites of heraton hotels the world over. Ex-pt for one rather significant differ-ice: in Iraq they were not negotiating ith the government to accept their tructural adjustments" in exchange r a loan; they were the government.

Some small steps were taken, how-ver, to bring Iraq's U.S.-appointed oliticians inside. Yegor Gaidar, the astermind of Russia's mid-nineties rivatization auction that gave away he country's assets to the reigning igarchs, was invited to share his wis-om at a conference in Baghdad. Marek Belka, who as finance minister versaw the same process in Poland, as brought in as well. The Iraqis who roved most gifted at mouthing the eocon lines were selected to act as hat USAID calls local "policy cham-ions"—men like Ahmad al Mukhtar, ho told me of his countrymen, "They re lazy. The Iraqis by nature, they re very dependent.... They will have o depend on themselves, it is the nly way to survive in the world to-ay." Although he has no economics ackground and his last job was read-ng the English-language news on tele-ision, al Mukhtar was appointed di-ector of foreign relations in the Ministry of Trade and is leading the charge for Iraq to join the World Trade Organization.

I had been following the economic ront of the war for almost a year efore I decided to go to Iraq. I at-ended the "Rebuilding Iraq" trade hows, studied Bremer's tax and nvestment laws, met with con-ractors at their home offices in he United States, interviewed the government officials in Washing-on who are making the policies. But as I prepared to travel to Iraq n March to see this experiment in free-narket utopianism up close, it was be-oming increasingly clear that all was ot going according to plan. Bremer ad been working on the theory that if ou build a corporate utopia the cor-orations will come—but where were hey? American multinationals were appy to accept U.S. taxpayer dollars to reconstruct the phone or electricity sys-tems, but they weren't sinking their own money into Iraq. There was, as yet, no McDonald's or Wal-Mart in Baghdad, and even the sales of state factories, announced so confidently nine months earlier, had not materialized.

Some of the holdup had to do with the physical risks of doing business in Iraq. But there were other more significant risks as well. When Paul Bremer shredded Iraq's Baathist constitution and replaced it with what *The Economist* greeted approvingly as "the wish list of foreign investors," there was one small detail he failed to mention: It was all completely illegal. The CPA derived its legal authority from United Nations Security Council Resolution 1483, passed in May 2003, which recognized the United States and Britain as Iraq's legitimate occupiers. It was this resolution that empowered Bremer to unilaterally make laws in Iraq. But the resolution also stated that the U.S. and Britain must "comply fully with their obligations under international law including in particular the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Hague Regulations of 1907." Both conventions were born as an attempt to curtail the unfortunate historical tendency among occupying powers to rewrite the rules so that they can economically strip the nations they control. With this in mind, the conventions stipulate that an occupier must abide by a country's existing laws unless "absolutely prevented" from doing so. They also state that an occupier does not own the "public buildings, real estate, forests and agricultural assets" of the country it is occupying but is rather their "administrator" and custodian, keeping them secure until sovereignty is reestablished. This was the true threat to the Year Zero plan: since America didn't own Iraq's assets, it could not legally sell them, which meant that after the occupation ended, an Iraqi government could come to power and decide that it wanted to keep the state companies in public hands, or, as is the norm in the Gulf region, to bar foreign firms from owning 100 percent of national assets. If that happened, investments made under Bremer's rules could be expropriated, leaving firms with no recourse because their investments had violated international law from the outset.

INTERNATIONAL LAW PROHIBITS OCCUPIERS FROM SELLING STATE ASSETS BUT DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING ABOUT PUPPET GOVERNMENTS

By November, trade lawyers started to advise their corporate clients not to go into Iraq just yet, that it would be better to wait until after the transition. Insurance companies were so spooked that not a single one of the big firms would insure investors for "political risk," that high-stakes area of insurance law that protects companies against foreign governments turning nationalist or socialist and expropriating their investments.

Even the U.S.-appointed Iraqi politicians, up to now so obedient, were getting nervous about their own political futures if they went along with the privatization plans. Communications Minister Haider al-Abadi told me about his first meeting with Bremer. "I said, 'Look, we don't have the mandate to sell any of this. Privatization is a big thing. We have to wait until there is an Iraqi government.'" Minister of Industry Mohamad Tofiq was even more direct: "I am not going to do something that is not legal, so that's it."

Both al-Abadi and Tofiq told me about a meeting—never reported in the press—that took place in late October 2003. At that gathering the twenty-five members of Iraq's Governing Council as well as the twenty-five interim ministers decided unanimously that they would not participate in the privatization of Iraq's state-owned companies or of its publicly owned infrastructure.

But Bremer didn't give up. International law prohibits occupiers from selling state assets themselves, but it doesn't say anything about the puppet governments they appoint. Originally, Bremer had pledged to hand over power to a directly elected Iraqi government, but in early November he went to Washington for a private meeting with President Bush and came back with a Plan B. On June 30 the occupation would officially end—but not really. It would be replaced by an appointed government, chosen by Wash-

ington. This government would not be bound by the international laws preventing occupiers from selling off state assets, but it would be bound by an "interim constitution," a document that would protect Bremer's investment and privatization laws.

The plan was risky. Bremer's June 30 deadline was awfully close, and it was chosen for a less than ideal reason: so that President Bush could trumpet the end of Iraq's occupation on the campaign trail. If everything went according to plan, Bremer would succeed in forcing a "sovereign" Iraqi government to carry out his illegal reforms. But if something went wrong, he would have to go ahead with the June 30 handover anyway because by then Karl Rove, and not Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld, would be calling the shots. And if it came down to a choice between ideology in Iraq and the electability of George W. Bush, everyone knew which would win.

At first, Plan B seemed to be right on track. Bremer persuaded the Iraqi Governing Council to agree to everything: the new timetable, the interim government, and the interim constitution. He even managed to slip into the constitution a completely overlooked clause, Article 26. It stated that for the duration of the interim government, "The laws, regulations, orders and directives issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority . . . shall remain in force" and could only be changed after general elections are held.

Bremer had found his legal loophole: There would be a window—seven months—when the occupation was officially over but before general elections were scheduled to take place. Within this window, the Hague and Geneva Conventions' bans on privatization would no longer apply, but Bremer's own laws, thanks to Article 26, would stand. During these seven months, foreign investors could come to Iraq and sign forty-year contracts to buy up Iraqi assets. If a future elected Iraqi government decided to change the rules, investors could sue for compensation.

But Bremer had a formidable opponent: Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani, the most senior Shia cleric in Iraq. al Sistani tried to block Bremer's plan at every turn, calling for immediate direct elections and for the constitution to be written after those elections, not before. Both demands, if met, would have closed Bremer's privatization window. Then, on March 2, with the Shia members of the Governing Council refusing to sign the interim constitution, five bombs exploded in front of mosques in Karbala and Baghdad, killing close to 200 worshipers. General John Abizaid, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, warned that the country was on the verge of civil war. Frightened by this prospect, al Sistani backed down and the Shia politicians signed the interim constitution. It was a familiar story: the shock of a violent attack paved the way for more shock therapy.

> MANY OF THE BUSINESSMEN WHOSE COMPANIES ARE THREATENED BY BREMER'S INVESTMENT LAWS HAVE MADE INVESTMENTS IN THE RESISTANCE

When I arrived in Iraq a week later, the economic project seemed to be back on track. All that remained for Bremer was to get his interim constitution ratified by a Security Council resolution, then the nervous lawyers and insurance brokers could relax and the sell-off of Iraq could finally begin. The CPA, meanwhile, had launched a major new P.R. offensive designed to reassure investors that Iraq was still a safe and exciting place to do business. The centerpiece of the campaign was Destination Baghdad Exposition, a massive trade show for potential investors to be held in early April at the Baghdad International Fairgrounds. It was the first such event inside Iraq, and the organizers had branded the trade fair "DBX," as if it were some sort of Mountain Dew–sponsored dirt-bike race. In keeping with the extreme-sports theme, Thomas Foley traveled to Washington to tell a gathering of executives that the risks in Iraq are akin "to skydiving or riding a motorcycle, which are, to many, very acceptable risks."

But three hours after my arrival in Baghdad, I was finding these reassurances extremely hard to believe. I had not yet unpacked when my hotel room was filled with debris and the windows in the lobby were shattered. Down the street, the Mount Lebanon Hotel had just been bombed, at that point the largest attack of its kind since the official end of the war. The next day another hotel was bombed in Basra, then two Finnish businessmen were murdered on their way to a meeting in Baghdad. Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt finally admitted that there was a pattern at work: "the extremists have started shifting away from the hard targets . . . [and] are now going out of their way to specifically target softer targets." The next day, the State Department updated its travel advisory: U.S. citizens were "strongly warned against travel to Iraq."

The physical risks of doing business in Iraq seemed to be spiraling out of control. This, once again, was not part of the original plan. When Bremer first arrived in Baghdad, the armed resistance was so low that he was able to walk the streets with a minimal security entourage. During his first four months on the job, 109 U.S. soldiers were killed and 570 were wounded. In the following four months, when Bremer's shock therapy had taken effect, the number of U.S. casualties almost doubled, with 195 soldiers killed and 1,630 wounded. There are many in Iraq who argue that these events are connected—that Bremer's reforms were the single largest factor leading to the rise of armed resistance.

Take, for instance, Bremer's first casualties. The soldiers and workers who laid off without pensions or severance pay didn't all disappear quietly. Many of them went straight into the mujahedeen, forming the backbone of the armed resistance. "Half a million people are now worse off, and there you have the water tap that keeps the insurgency going. It's alternative employment," says Hussain Kubba, head of the prominent Iraqi business group Kubba Consulting. Some of Bremer's other economic casualties also have failed to go quietly. It turns out that many of the businessmen whose companies are threatened by Bremer's investment laws

e decided to make investments of
ir own—in the resistance. It is part-
heir money that keeps fighters in
ashnikovs and RPGs.

These developments present a chal-
ge to the basic logic of shock ther-
: the neocons were convinced that
ey brought in their reforms quick-
nd ruthlessly, Iraqis would be too
nned to resist. But the shock ap-
rs to have had the opposite effect;
her than the predicted paralysis, it
ed many Iraqis into action, much of
extreme. Haider al-Abadi, Iraq's
nister of communication, puts it this
y: "We know that there are ter-
ists in the country, but previous-
they were not successful, they
re isolated. Now because the
ole country is unhappy, and a lot
people don't have jobs . . . these
rorists are finding listening ears."

Bremer was now at odds not
ly with the Iraqis who opposed
plans but with U.S military com-
nders charged with putting down
e insurgency his policies were feed-
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firms, how about putting
them back to work?

From the start, the neocons run-
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ring the war, U.S. forces did
othing. Sabah Asaad, managing
rector of a refrigerator factory out-
de Baghdad, told me that while the
oting was going on, he went to a
earby U.S. Army base and begged
r help. "I asked one of the officers
send two soldiers and a vehicle to
elp me kick out the looters. I was
ying. The officer said, 'Sorry, we
an't do anything, we need an order
om President Bush.'" Back in
Washington, Donald Rumsfeld
arugged. "Free people are free to
ake mistakes and commit crimes
nd do bad things."

To see the remains of Asaad's
otball-field-size warehouse is to un-
erstand why Frank Gehry had an artis-
tic crisis after September 11 and was briefly unable to design structures resembling the rubble of modern buildings. Asaad's looted and burned factory looks remarkably like a heavy-metal version of Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, with waves of steel, buckled by fire, lying in terrifyingly beautiful golden heaps. Yet all was not lost. "The looters were good-hearted," one of Asaad's painters told me, explaining that they left the tools and machines behind, "so we could work again." Because the machines are still there, many factory managers in Iraq say that it would take little for them to return to full production. They need emergency generators to cope with daily blackouts, and they need capital for parts and raw materials. If that happened, it would have tremendous implications for Iraq's stalled reconstruction, because it would mean that many of the key materials needed to rebuild—cement and steel, bricks and furniture—could be produced inside the country.



AFTER THE ATTACK ON THE MOUNT LEBANON HOTEL

But it hasn't happened. Immediately after the nominal end of the war, Congress appropriated $2.5 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq, followed by an additional $18.4 billion in October. Yet as of July 2004, Iraq's state-owned factories had been pointedly excluded from the reconstruction contracts. Instead, the billions have all gone to Western companies, with most of the materials for the reconstruction imported at great expense from abroad.

With unemployment as high as 67 percent, the imported products and foreign workers flooding across the borders have become a source of tremendous resentment in Iraq and yet another open tap fueling the insurgency. And Iraqis don't have to look far for reminders of this injustice; it's on display in the most ubiquitous symbol of the occupation: the blast wall. The ten-foot-high slabs of reinforced concrete are everywhere in Iraq, separating the protected—the people in upscale hotels, luxury homes, military bases, and, of course, the Green Zone—from the unprotected and exposed. If that wasn't injury enough, all the blast walls are imported, from Kurdistan, Turkey, or even farther afield, this despite the fact that Iraq was once a major manufacturer of cement, and could easily be again. There are seventeen state-owned cement factories across the country, but most are idle or working at only half capacity. According to the Ministry of Industry, not one of these factories has received a single contract to help with the reconstruction, even though they could produce the walls and meet other needs for cement at a greatly reduced cost. The CPA pays up to $1,000 per imported blast wall; local manufacturers say they could make them for $100. Minister Tofiq says there is a simple reason why the Americans refuse to help get Iraq's cement factories running again: among those making the decisions, "no one believes in the public sector."[*]

This kind of ideological blindness has turned Iraq's occupiers into prisoners of their own policies, hiding behind walls that, by their very existence, fuel the rage at the U.S. presence, thereby feeding the need for

*Tofiq did say that several U.S. companies had expressed strong interest in buying the state-owned cement factories. This supports a widely held belief in Iraq that there is a deliberate strategy to neglect the state firms so that they can be sold more cheaply—a practice known as "starve then sell."*

more walls. In Baghdad the concrete barriers have been given a popular nickname: Bremer Walls.

As the insurgency grew, it soon became clear that if Bremer went ahead with his plans to sell off the state companies, it could worsen the violence. There was no question that privatization would require layoffs: the Ministry of Industry estimates that roughly 145,000 workers would have to be fired to make the firms desirable to investors, with each of those workers supporting, on average, five family members. For Iraq's besieged occupiers the question was: Would these shock-therapy casualties accept their fate or would they rebel?

The answer arrived, in rather dramatic fashion, at one of the largest state-owned companies, the General



A MAN ATTEMPTS TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR HIS FAMILY, SADR CITY

Company for Vegetable Oils. The complex of six factories in a Baghdad industrial zone produces cooking oil, hand soap, laundry detergent, shaving cream, and shampoo. At least that is what I was told by a receptionist who gave me glossy brochures and calendars boasting of "modern instruments" and "the latest and most up to date developments in the field of industry." But when I approached the soap factory, I discovered a group of workers sleeping outside a darkened building. Our guide rushed ahead, shouting some-

[illegible] into activity: lights switched on, motors revved [illegible] still blanking [illegible] began filling [illegible] liter plastic bottles with pale blue Zahi brand dishwashing liquid.

I asked Nada Ahmed, the woman in the white coat, why the factory wasn't working a few minutes before. She explained that they have only enough electricity and materials to run the machines for a couple of hours a day, but when guests arrive—would-be investors, ministry officials, journalists—they get them going. "For show," she explained. Behind us, a dozen bulky machines sat idle, covered in sheets of dusty plastic and secured with duct tape.

In one dark corner of the plant, we came across an old man hunched over a sack filled with white plastic caps. With a thin metal blade lodged in a wedge of wax, he carefully whittled down the edges of each cap, leaving a pile of shavings at his feet. "We don't have the spare part for the proper mold, so we have to cut them by hand," his supervisor explained apologetically. "We haven't received any parts from Germany since the sanctions began." I noticed that even on the assembly lines that were nominally working there was almost no mechanization: bottles were held under spouts by hand because conveyor belts don't convey, lids once snapped on by machines were being hammered in place with wooden mallets. Even the water for the factory was drawn from an outdoor well, hoisted by hand, and carried inside.

The solution proposed by the U.S. occupiers was not to fix the plant but to sell it, and so when Bremer announced the privatization auction back in June 2003 this was among the first companies mentioned. Yet when I visited the factory in March, nobody wanted to talk about the privatization plan; the mere mention of the word inside the plant inspired awkward silences and meaningful glances. There seemed an unnatural amount of subtext for a soap factory, and I tried to get to the bottom of it when I interviewed the assistant manager. But the interview itself was equally odd: I had spent half a week setting it up, submitting written questions for approval, getting a signed letter of permission from the minister of industry, being questioned and searched several times. But when I finally began the interview, the assistant manager refused to tell me his name or let me record the conversation. "Any manager mentioned in the press is attacked afterwards," he said. And when I asked whether the company was being sold, he gave the oblique response: "If the decision was up to the workers, they are against privatization; but if it's up to the high-ranking officials and government, then privatization is an order and orders must be followed."

I left the plant feeling that I knew less than when I'd arrived. But on the way out of the gates, a young security guard handed my translator a note. He wanted us to meet him after work at a nearby restaurant, "to find out what is really going on with privatization." His name was Mahmud, and he was a twenty-five-year-old with a neat beard and big black eyes. (For his safety, I have omitted his last name.) His story began in July, a few weeks after Bremer's privatization announcement. The company's manager, on his way to work, was shot to death. Press reports speculated that the manager was murdered because he was in favor of privatizing the plant, but Mahmud was convinced that he was killed because he opposed the plan. "He would never have sold the factories like this

nericans want. That's why they ed him."

The dead man was replaced by a new nager, Mudhfar Ja'far. Shortly after ing over, Ja'far called a meeting with nistry officials to discuss selling off soap factory, which would involve ing off two thirds of its employees. arding that meeting were several urity officers from the plant. They ened closely to Ja'far's plans d promptly reported the alarm- news to their coworkers. "We re shocked," Mahmud recalled. the private sector buys our com- ny, the first thing they would is reduce the staff to make more ney. And we will be forced into very hard destiny, because the tory is our only way of living."

Frightened by this prospect, a group seventeen workers, including Mahud, marched into Ja'far's office to nfront him on what they had heard. Unfortunately, he wasn't there, only e assistant manager, the one you et," Mahmud told me. A fight broke t: one worker struck the assistant nager, and a bodyguard fired three ots at the workers. The crowd then acked the bodyguard, took his gun, d, Mahmud said, "stabbed him with knife in the back three times. He ent a month in the hospital." In Jan- ry there was even more violence. On eir way to work, Ja'far, the manager, d his son were shot and badly in- red. Mahmud told me he had no idea no was behind the attack, but I was rting to understand why factory man- ers in Iraq try to keep a low profile.

At the end of our meeting, I asked ahmud what would happen if the ant was sold despite the workers' jections. "There are two choices," e said, looking me in the eye and miling kindly. "Either we will set the ctory on fire and let the flames de- our it to the ground, or we will blow urselves up inside of it. But it will not e privatized."

If there ever was a moment when aqis were too disoriented to resist ock therapy, that moment has definitely passed. Labor relations, like verything else in Iraq, has become a lood sport. The violence on the reets howls at the gates of the facto es, threatening to engulf them. Work- rs fear job loss as a death sentence, and managers, in turn, fear their workers, a fact that makes privatization distinctly more complicated than the neocons foresaw.*

As I left the meeting with Mahmud, I got word that there was a major demonstration outside the CPA headquarters. Supporters of the radical young cleric Moqtada al Sadr were protesting the closing of their newspaper, *al Hawza*, by military police. The CPA accused *al Hawza* of publishing "false articles" that could "pose the real threat of violence." As an example, it cited an article that claimed Bremer "is pursuing a policy of starving the Iraqi people to make them preoccupied with procuring their daily bread so they do not have the chance to demand their political and individual freedoms." To me it sounded less like hate literature than a concise summary of Milton Friedman's recipe for shock therapy.

IF EVER THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN IRAQIS WERE TOO DISORIENTED TO RESIST SHOCK THERAPY, THAT MOMENT HAS DEFINITELY PASSED

A few days before the newspaper was shut down, I had gone to Kufa during Friday prayers to listen to al Sadr at his mosque. He had launched into a tirade against Bremer's newly signed interim constitution, calling it "an unjust, terrorist document." The message of the sermon was clear: Grand Ayatollah Ali al Sistani may have backed down on the constitution, but al Sadr and his supporters were still determined to fight it—and if they succeeded they would sabotage the neocons' careful plan to saddle Iraq's next government with their "wish list" of laws. With the closing of the newspaper, Bremer was giving al Sadr his response: he wasn't negotiating with this young upstart; he'd rather take him out with force.

When I arrived at the demonstration, the streets were filled with men dressed in black, the soon-to-be legendary Mahdi Army. It struck me that if Mahmud lost his security guard job at the soap factory, he could be one of them. That's who al Sadr's foot soldiers are: the young men who have been shut out of the neocons' grand plans for Iraq, who see no possibilities for work, and whose neighborhoods have seen none of the promised reconstruction. Bremer has failed these young men, and everywhere that he has failed, Moqtada al Sadr has cannily set out to succeed. In Shia slums from Baghdad to Basra, a network of Sadr Centers coordinate a kind of shadow reconstruction. Funded through donations, the centers dispatch electricians to fix power and phone lines, organize local garbage collection, set up emergency generators, run blood drives, direct traffic where the streetlights don't work. And yes, they organize militias too. Al Sadr took Bremer's economic casualties, dressed them in black, and gave them rusty Kalashnikovs. His militiamen protected the mosques and the state factories when the occupation authorities did not, but in some areas they also went further, zealously enforcing Islamic law by torching liquor stores and terrorizing women without the veil. Indeed, the astronomical rise of the brand of religious fundamentalism that al Sadr represents is another kind of blowback from Bremer's shock therapy: if the reconstruction had provided jobs, security, and services to Iraqis, al Sadr would have been deprived of both his mission and many of his newfound followers.

At the same time as al Sadr's followers were shouting "Down with America" outside the Green Zone, something was happening in another part of the country that would change everything. Four American mercenary soldiers were killed in Fallujah, their charred and dismembered bodies hung like trophies over the Euphrates. The attacks would prove a devastating blow for the neocons, one from which they

* *It is in Basra where the connections between economic reforms and the rise of the resistance was put in starkest terms. In December the union representing oil workers was negotiating with the Oil Ministry for a salary increase. Getting nowhere, the workers offered the ministry a simple choice: increase their paltry salaries or they would all join the armed resistance. They received a substantial raise.*

would never recover. With these images, investing in Iraq suddenly didn't look anything like a capitalist dream; it looked like a macabre nightmare made real.

The day I left Baghdad was the worst yet. Fallujah was under siege and Brig. Gen. Kimmitt was threatening to "destroy the al-Mahdi Army." By the end, roughly 2,000 Iraqis were killed in these twin campaigns. I was dropped off at a security checkpoint several miles from the airport, then loaded onto a bus jammed with contractors lugging hastily packed bags. Although no one was calling it one, this was an evacuation: over the next week 1,500 contractors left Iraq, and some governments began airlifting their citizens out of the country. On the bus no one spoke; we all just listened to the mortar fire, craning our necks to see the red glow. A guy carrying a KPMG briefcase decided to lighten things up. "So is there business class on this flight?" he asked the silent bus. From the back, somebody called out, "Not yet."

Indeed, it may be quite a while before business class truly arrives in Iraq. When we landed in Amman, we learned that we had gotten out just in time. That morning three Japanese civilians were kidnapped and their captors were threatening to burn them alive. Two days later Nicholas Berg went missing and was not seen again until the snuff film surfaced of his beheading, an even more terrifying message for U.S. contractors than the charred bodies in Fallujah. These were the start of a wave of kidnappings and killings of foreigners, most of them businesspeople, from a rainbow of nations: South Korea, Italy, China, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey. By the end of June more than ninety contractors were reported dead in Iraq. When seven Turkish contractors were kidnapped in June, their captors asked the "company to cancel all contracts and pull out employees from Iraq." Many insurance companies stopped selling life insurance to contractors, and others began to charge premiums as high as $10,000 a week for a single Western executive—the same price some insurgents reportedly pay for a dead American.

For their part, the organizers of DBX, the historic Baghdad trade fair, decided to relocate to the lovely tourist city of Diyarbakir in Turkey, "just 250 km from the Iraqi border." An Iraqi landscape, only without those frightening Iraqis. Three weeks later just fifteen people showed up for a Commerce Department conference in Lansing, Michigan, on investing in Iraq. Its host, Republican Congressman Mike Rogers, tried to reassure his skeptical audience by saying that Iraq is "like a rough neighborhood anywhere in America." The foreign investors, the ones who were offered every imaginable free-market enticement, are clearly not convinced; there is still no sign of them. Keith Crane, a senior economist at the Rand Corporation who has worked for the CPA, put it bluntly: "I don't believe the board of a multinational company could approve a major investment in this environment. If people are shooting at each other, it's just difficult to do business." Hamid Jassim Khamis, the manager of the largest soft-drink bottling plant in the region, told me he can't find any investors, even though he landed the exclusive rights to produce Pepsi in central Iraq. "A lot of people have approached us to invest in the factory, but people are really hesitating now." Khamis said he couldn't blame them; in five months he has survived an attempted assassination, a carjacking, two bombs planted at the entrance of his factory, and the kidnapping of his son.

Despite having been granted the first license for a foreign bank to operate in Iraq in forty years, HSBC still hasn't opened any branches, a decision that may mean losing the coveted license altogether. Procter & Gamble has put its joint venture on hold, and so has General Motors. The U.S. financial backers of the Starwood luxury hotel and multiplex have gotten cold feet, and Siemens AG has pulled most staff from Iraq. The bell hasn't rung yet at the Baghdad Stock Exchange—in fact you can't even use credit cards in Iraq's cash-only economy. New Bridge Strategies, the company that had gushed back in October about how "a Wal-Mart could take over the country," is sounding distinctly humbled. "McDonald's is not opening anytime soon," company partner Ed Rogers told the *Washington Post*. Nor is ther is Wal-Mart. The *Financial Times* has declared Iraq "the most dangerous place in the world in which to do business." It's quite an accomplishment: in trying to design the best place in the world to do business, the neocons have managed to create the worst, the most eloquent indictment yet of the guiding logic behind deregulated free markets.

The violence has not just kept investors out; it also forced Bremer, before he left, to abandon many of his central economic policies. Privatization of the state companies is off the table; instead, several of the state companies have been offered up for lease, but only if the investor agrees not to lay off a single employee. Thousands of the state workers that Bremer fired have been rehired, and significant raises have been handed out in the public sector as a whole. Plans to do away with the food-ration program have also been scrapped—it just doesn't seem like a good time to deny millions of Iraqis the only nutrition on which they can depend.

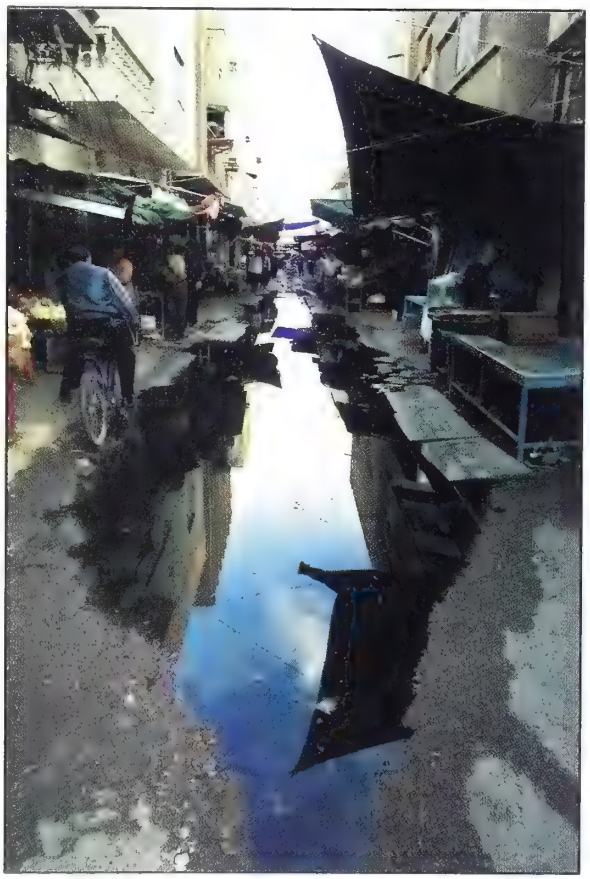
The final blow to the neocon dream came in the weeks before the handover. The White House and the CPA were rushing to get the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution endorsing their handover plan. They had twisted arms to give the top job to former CIA agent Iyad Allawi, a move that will ensure that Iraq becomes, at the very least, the coaling station for U.S. troops that Jay Garner originally envisioned. But if major corporate investors were going to come to Iraq in the future, they would need a stronger guarantee that Bremer's economic laws would stick. There was only one way of doing that: the Security Council resolution had to ratify the interim constitution, which locked in Bremer's laws for the duration of the interim government. But al Sistani once again objected, this time unequivocally, saying that the constitution has been "rejected by the majority of the Iraqi people." On June 8 the Security Council unanimously passed a resolution that endorsed the handover plan but made absolutely no reference to the constitution. In the face of this far-reaching defeat, George W. Bush ce-

ated the resolution as a historic vic-
, one that came just in time for an
tion trail photo op at the G-8 Sum-
in Georgia.

With Bremer's laws in limbo, Iraqi
nisters are already talking openly
ut breaking contracts signed by the
A. Citigroup's loan scheme has
n rejected as a misuse of Iraq's oil
enues. Iraq's communication min-
r is threatening to renegotiate con-
cts with the three communications
as providing the country with its
astrously poor cell phone service.
d the Lebanese and U.S. compa-
s hired to run the state tele-
ion network have been in-
med that they could lose
ir licenses because they are
Iraqi. "We will see if we
n change the contract,"
mid al-Kifaey, spokesperson
the Governing Council,
d in May. "They have no
a about Iraq." For most in-
stors, this complete lack of
,al certainty simply makes
q too great a risk.

But while the Iraqi resistance
s managed to scare off the
st wave of corporate raiders,
ere's little doubt that they
ll return. Whatever form the
xt Iraqi government takes—
tionalist, Islamist, or free
arket—it will inherit a shat-
red nation with a crushing
20 billion debt. Then, as in
poor countries around the
orld, men in dark blue suits
om the IMF will appear at the
or, bearing loans and promis-
of economic boom, provid-
that certain structural ad-
stments are made, which will,
course, be rather painful at
st but well worth the sacrifice
the end. In fact, the process
as already begun: the IMF is
ised to approve loans worth $2.5–
4.25 billion, pending agreement on
ne conditions. After an endless suc-
ession of courageous last stands and far
o many lost lives, Iraq will become a
or nation like any other, with politi-
ans determined to introduce policies
jected by the vast majority of the
opulation, and all the imperfect com-
romises that will entail. The free mar-
et will no doubt come to Iraq, but the
neoconservative dream of transform-
ing the country into a free-market
utopia has already died, a casualty of a
greater dream—a second term for
George W. Bush.

The great historical irony of the
catastrophe unfolding in Iraq is that
the shock-therapy reforms that were
supposed to create an economic
boom that would rebuild the country
have instead fueled a resistance that
ultimately made reconstruction im-
possible. Bremer's reforms unleashed
forces that the neocons neither pre-
dicted nor could hope to control,



SEWAGE FLOWS THROUGH THE STREETS OF BAGHDAD

from armed insurrections inside fac-
tories to tens of thousands of unem-
ployed young men arming them-
selves. These forces have transformed
Year Zero in Iraq into the mirror op-
posite of what the neocons envi-
sioned: not a corporate utopia but a
ghoulish dystopia, where going to a
simple business meeting can get you
lynched, burned alive, or beheaded.
These dangers are so great that in
Iraq global capitalism has retreated,
at least for now. For the neocons, this
must be a shocking development:
their ideological belief in greed turns
out to be stronger than greed itself.

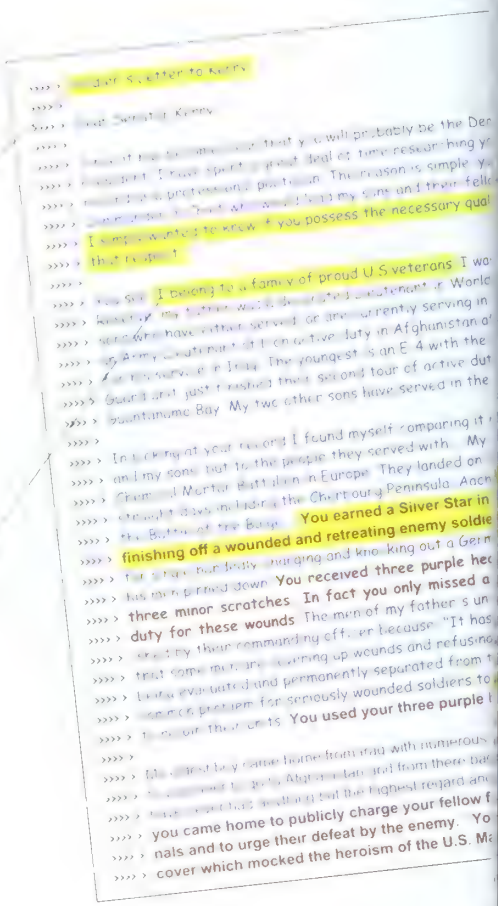
Iraq was to the neocons what
Afghanistan was to the Taliban: the
one place on Earth where they could
force everyone to live by the most lit-
eral, unyielding interpretation of their
sacred texts. One would think that the
bloody results of this experiment would
inspire a crisis of faith: in the country
where they had absolute free reign,
where there was no local government
to blame, where economic re-
forms were introduced at their
most shocking and most per-
fect, they created, instead of a
model free market, a failed state
no right-thinking investor
would touch. And yet the
Green Zone neocons and their
masters in Washington are no
more likely to reexamine their
core beliefs than the Taliban
mullahs were inclined to search
their souls when their Islamic
state slid into a debauched
Hades of opium and sex slavery.
When facts threaten true be-
lievers, they simply close their
eyes and pray harder.

Which is precisely what
Thomas Foley has been doing.
The former head of "private
sector development" has left
Iraq, a country he had de-
scribed as "the mother of all
turnarounds," and has accept-
ed another turnaround job, as
co-chair of George Bush's re-
election committee in Con-
necticut. On April 30 in
Washington he addressed a
crowd of entrepreneurs about
business prospects in Baghdad.
It was a tough day to be giving
an upbeat speech: that morn-
ing the first photographs had appeared
out of Abu Ghraib, including one of a
hooded prisoner with electrical wires
attached to his hands. This was an-
other kind of shock therapy, far more
literal than the one Foley had helped
to administer, but not entirely uncon-
nected. "Whatever you're seeing, it's
not as bad as it appears," Foley told
the crowd. "You just need to accept
that on faith." ■

# CHAIN

## In chain emails, the right has f

Although the Internet is often heralded as a tool for the political left (cf. the Dean campaign, MoveOn.org), at least one form of online politicking has come to enjoy far more favor on the right: the chain email. A prime example is this "soldier's letter to Kerry," which since February has been so widely forwarded that its author now receives several phone calls a day concerning it; other popular subjects of such emails include the left's insufficient spending on defense, its coddling of terrorists, its corrupting wealth and cosmopolitanism. The medium of the chain letter—from its beginnings a century ago as a proselytization tool to its continuing use, today, in circulating tales of kidney thieves and of flesh-eating diseases spread by Costa Rican bananas—has always succeeded by playing to certain weaknesses in its readership, chief among them paranoia and gullibility. In this way is the medium perfectly suited to the contemporary right.




Frequently these emails circulate above the name of a U.S. military veteran. Often these attributions are fictitious; this email is exceptional in that its listed author was easily located, and confirmed he had written the piece. Real or no, most of the veteran-authors are relatively unknown men—they are anonymous soldiers, selfless everymen, who emerge to remind us of self-evident truths: that liberals are wimps, are disloyal, are naive; that liberals loathe servicemen, defund the military; that a liberal commander in chief could not adequately defend America. These happen to be precisely the points that are most difficult for the right's current presidential and vice presidential candidates, both of whom avoided real service, to make themselves against a decorated war-hero opponent. These "soldier's letters" also help to advance the myth that veterans and the military are united behind the G.O.P., when in fact the demographic, which typically has favored Republicans, is in the latest polls equally split.

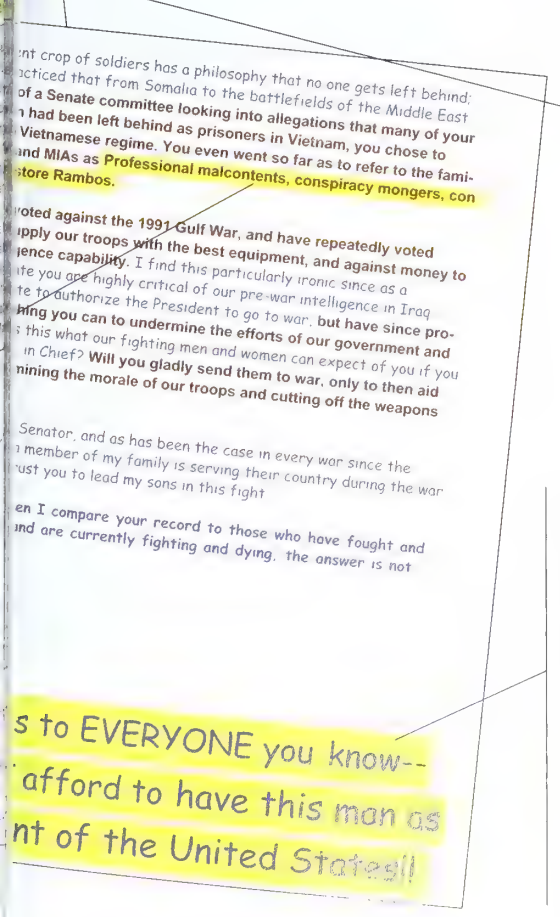
This is a startling phrase, the effectiveness of which is little diminished by the fact that John Kerry never said it. It was, in fact, spoken by Republican John McCain during a 1994 Senate debate. Like other chain emails, this missive is a long string of fictions and half-fictions, with a few accepted facts that serve to head off suspicion. (Sociological studies of urban legends have found that purely fictional or purely true stories tend to succeed far less often than hybrids of the two.) When the letter claims that Kerry "repeatedly voted against funds to supply our troops with the best equipment," it is no doubt referring to a 1991 Senate vote against an omnibus bill so bloated that many of its appropriations were opposed by the then-defense secretary, Dick Cheney. But few readers of this email will ever discover that fact: rarely are corrections or clarifications forwarded afterward.

*Tom Luckman's last piece for* Harper's Magazine, *"Surveying the Wreckage," appeared in the March issue.*

# OOLS

## ıral medium, *by Jon Lackman*

The letter affects the polite, earnest tone of a man who has never before in his life held a political opinion. "I simply wanted to know if you possess the necessary qualifications to be trusted in that respect." "You see." "I found myself." Michael Connelly, Esq., in fact is a lifelong Republican who has volunteered on at least eight political campaigns and written several other partisan tracts. But he pretends to begin his investigation of Kerry from an agnostic, even hopeful position, and so his letter reads like a journey into disillusionment, meriting a final outburst: "Not just no, but Hell No!" Chain emails often deploy a little salty talk, to demonstrate that the writer, normally the forbearing sort, has finally and justifiably lost his patience with the childish left; that this time, there is nothing the P.C. liberals can do to hold him back—the same reasoning, perhaps, that led Dick Cheney recently to tell a Democrat on the Senate floor to "go fuck yourself."




To write this letter, Connelly told me, he did "quite a lot of research," adding that his research began at the website of Vietnam Veterans Against John Kerry—a stew of misinformation, including this particular canard. (Kerry's Silver Star was awarded for his command of a six-man swiftboat in a dangerous raid, of which his own pursuit of a fleeing enemy soldier was—for better or for worse—merely the final act.) Typically the "facts" in these chain emails have been cribbed directly off right-wing websites, after which the emails themselves are posted to even more websites. Soon, lo and behold, a lie is so widespread that it can, with plausible deniability, be disseminated by a more established source. For example, a chain letter about Kerry's supposed Senate votes on military spending was recently repackaged as a "Research Briefing" for the website of the Republican Party. Thus are voices in the wilderness ventriloquized by the G.O.P. machine.

Like talk radio, chain email creates an illusory world in which the people, finally given their say, speak in unison for the right. At their ends, the emails often retain a hint of their evangelical roots, exhorting readers to guard against leftist false friends, against redistributionist devils in disguise. Asked why he wrote this, Connelly replied, "Well, the national media, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and NBC News, were never going to report the inconsistencies about his story." Polls show that Republicans, stoked by superstitions of "liberal bias," are abandoning newspapers and network TV; more so than Democrats, they have begun to put their trust in partisan fare like this. In truth, precisely to ward off unfounded suspicions like Connelly's, all three outlets he mentions have devoted far too much time and space to the nonstories mentioned in this email. A paranoiac might conclude this to have been the G.O.P.'s strategy all along.

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# IN DEFIANCE OF GRAVITY

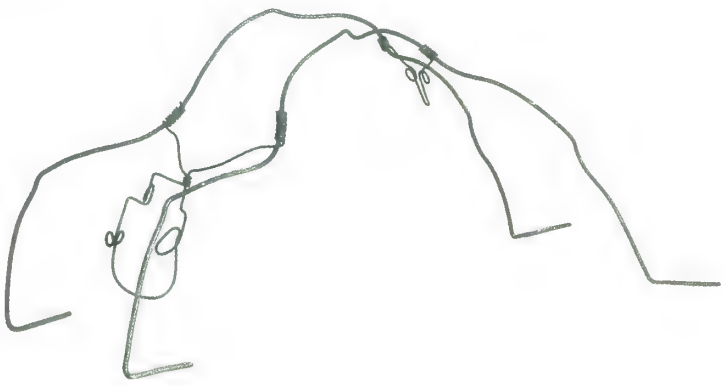
## Writing, wisdom, and the Fabulous Club Gemini

*By Tom Robbins*

It had been a long time since I'd contemplated suicide. In fact, I don't believe I'd ever before considered the corporal DELETE key an option. Yet here I was, teetering on a bridge high above some oyster-lit backwater from Puget Sound, thinking about closing my earthly accounts with a leap and a splash.

Why? My romantic life couldn't have been sweeter, my health was close to rosy, the writing was going well, finances were adequate, and while the horror show that that cupidinous cult of corporate vampires was making of our federal government might be enough to drive me to drink (a trip I'm seldom reluctant to take), the political knavery does not exist that could drive me *into* the drink. No, the truth is I was being prodded to execute a Kevorkian header into the Stygian slough by a short story I'd just read in a back issue of *The New Yorker*.

Entitled (ironically enough) "Fun With Problems," the piece was composed by Robert Stone, and you can bet it wasn't Stone's prose style that had weakened my will to live: the man's a crack technician whose choices of verb and adjective can sometimes floor me with admiration. He's a smithery of a storyteller who's hammered out a stalwart *oeuvre*—but holy Chernobyl is he bleak! Stone apparently believes the human condition one pathetically unstable piece of business, and, frankly, at this stage of our evolutionary development there's a shortage of evidence to contradict him. Nevertheless, I'd always counted myself among those free spirits who refuse to allow mankind's ignoble deportment and dumb-cluck diatheses to cloud their grand perspective or sleet on their parade. On that day, however, Stone's narrative prowess had been such as to infect me (unconscionably, I now contend) with his *Weltschmerz*.



In fairness, Stone alone was not to blame. For too many years my edacious reading habits had been leading me into one unappealing corner after another, dank cul-de-sacs littered with tear-stained diaries, empty pill bottles, bulging briefcases, broken vows, humdrum phrases, sociological swab samples, and the (lovely?) bones of dismembered children: the detritus of a literary scene that, with several notable exceptions, has been about as entertaining as a Taliban theme park and as elevating as the prayer breakfast at the Bates Motel. "Fun With Problems" was simply the final straw, the charred cherry atop a mad-cow sundae.

So who knows how things might have turned out that glum afternoon had not I suddenly heard, as I flirted

*Tom Robbins is the author of eight novels, all of which are currently in print. His latest, Incognito, was published in 2003 by Bantam.*

*Acrobat*, by Alexander Calder © Estate of Alexander Calder/Artists Rights Society (ARS) and Art Resource, New York City

with extinction, a particular sound in my mind's ear: the sound, believe it or not, of a distant kitty cat, a sound that instantly transported me away from the lure of fatal waters, away from the toxic contagions of sordid fiction, and into a place—a real place, though I've only visited it in my imagination—a place called the Fabulous Club Gemini.

The Fabulous Club Gemini. Where is it, anyhow? Memphis, probably. Or Houston. No, actually I think it might be one of the ideologically unencumbered features of Washington, D.C. In any case, some years back, a music writer for *The Village Voice* made a pilgrimage to the smoke-polluted, windowless, cinder-block venue, wherever its exact location, and while being introduced to some of the ancient musicians who'd been playing the Fabulous Club Gemini practically since the vagitus of time, the pilgrim became so excited he momentarily lost his downtown cool.

"I can't believe," he quoted himself as having gushed, "that I'm talking to the man who barked on Big Mama Thornton's recording of 'Hound Dog'!"

"Yeah," the grizzled sideman drawled. "I was gonna meow—but it was too hip for 'em."

Okay, perhaps I'm overly fanciful, but I have reason to suspect it might have been precisely an echo from that crusty confession that, as incongruous as it may seem, enticed me down from the kamikaze viaduct. I do know that I'm often reminded of it when I glance at the annual lists of Pulitzers, Booker Prizes, or National Book Awards; when an interviewer's question forces me to reexamine my personal literary aesthetic; or when speaking with eager students in those university creative-writing programs where prescribed, if rarefied, barking is actively promoted and any feline departure summarily euthanized.

There's some validity, I suppose, in the academic approach, for, as Big Mama's accompanist would attest, our culture simply has a far greater demand for the predictable bow-wow than for the unexpected caterwaul: orthodox woofing pays the rent. In a dogma-eat-dogma world, a few teachers, editors, and critics may be hip enough to tolerate a subversive mew, a quirky purr now and again, but they're well aware of the fate that awaits those who produce—or sanction—mysterious off-the-wall meowing when familiar yaps and snarls are clearly called for.

Let me explain that when I refer to "meowing" here, what I'm really talking about is the human impulse to be playful; an impulse all too frequently demeaned and suppressed in the adult population, especially when it manifests itself in an unconventional manner or inappropriate context. To bark at the end of a song entitled "Hound Dog" is just playful enough to elicit a soupçon of mainstream amusement, but Fred (I believe that was the sessionman's name), in wanting instead to meow, was pushing the envelope and raising the stakes, raising them to a "hipper" level perhaps, a more irreverent level undoubtedly. There's a sense in which ol' Fred was showing a tiny spark of what the Tibetans call "crazy wisdom," a sense in which he was assuming for a bare instant the archetypal role of the holy fool.

Now, the fact that Fred would have denied any such arcane ambition, the fact that he may only have been stoned out of his gourd at the time, all that is irrelevant. It's also unimportant that Fred's recording-studio tomfoolery lacked real profundity, that while it may have been eccentrically playful it was not very *seriously* playful. What does matter is that we come to recognize that playfulness, as a philosophical stance, can be very serious, indeed; and, moreover, that it possesses an unfailing capacity to arouse ridicule and hostility in those among us who crave certainty, reverence, and restraint.

The fact that playfulness—a kind of *divine* playfulness intended to lighten man's existential burden and promote what Joseph Campbell called "the rapture of being alive"—lies near the core of Zen, Taoist, Sufi, and Tantric teachings is lost on most Westerners: working stiffs and intellectuals alike. Even scholars who acknowledge the playful undertone in those disciplines treat it with condescension and disrespect, never mind that it's a worldview arrived at after millennia of exhaustive study, deep meditation, unflinching observation, and intense debate.

Tell an editor at *The New York Review of Books* that Abbot Chogyam Trungpa would squirt his disciples with water pistols when they became overly earnest in their meditative practice, or that the house of Japan's most venerated ninja is filled with Mickey Mouse memorabilia, and you'll witness an eye roll of silent-movie proportions. Like that fusty old patriarch in the Bible, when they become a man (or woman), they "put away childish things," which is to say they seal over with the hard gray wax of fear and pomposity that aspect of their being that once was attuned to wonder.

As a result of their having abandoned that part of human nature that is potentially most transcendent, it's no surprise that modern intellectuals dismiss playfulness—especially when it dares to present itself in literature, philosophy, or art—as frivolous or whimsical. Men who wear bow ties to work every day (let's make an exception for Pee-Wee Herman), men whose dreams have been usurped either by the shallow aspirations of the marketplace or by the drab clichés of Marxist realpolitik, such men are not adroit at distinguishing that which is lighthearted from that which is merely lightweight. God knows what confusion thunders might rumble in their sinuses were they to encounter a concept such as "crazy wisdom."

Crazy wisdom is, of course, the opposite of conventional wisdom. It is wisdom that deliberately swims against the current in order to avoid being swept along in the numbing wake of bourgeois compromise; wisdom that flouts taboos in order to undermine their power; wisdom that evolves when one, while refusing to avert one's gaze from the sorrows and injustices of the world, insists on joy in spite of everything; wisdom that embraces risk and eschews security; wisdom that turns the tables on neurosis by lampooning it; the wisdom of those who neither seek authority nor willingly submit to it.

Oddly enough, one of the most striking illustrations of crazy wisdom in all of Western literature occurs in a pedestrian piece of police pulp by Joseph Wambaugh. *The Black Marble* is so stylistically lifeless it could have

n printed in embalming fluid, but rigor mortis of its prose is temarily enlivened by a scattering of nes that I shall attempt to summa- (though it's been decades since I d the book).

As I remember it, a relatively inexienced member of the Los Angeles ice Department is transferred to vice squad. No sooner does the v cop report for duty than he's induced to a strange lottery. There it seems, an undesirable beat, a secn of the city that no vice cop ever nts to patrol. It's a sleazy, filthy, atile, extremely dangerous area, full shooting galleries and dark alleys d not a doughnut shop in sight. So at has been the objection to being igned to that sinister beat that the cinct captain has devised a raffle cope with it. At the beginning of ch night shift, he produces a bag of rbles, every marble white save one. ne by one, the cops reach in the bag d pull out their fate. The unfortunate no draws the single black marble ust screw up his spine and descend at evening into the urban hell.

Around the drawing of the marbles ere's a considerable amount of tenon, and the new man quickly sucmbs to it. Just showing up for work twice as stressful as it ought to be. the station house, negativity is evalent, jovial camaraderie rare.

The new cop draws the black marle a couple of times and finds the eaded zone to be as violent and unvory as advertised. However, he not nly survives there; he learns he can olerate the beat reasonably well by hanging his attitude toward it, by rearding it less as a tribulation than as me special opportunity to escape outine and regularity, by appreciating as an unusual experience available very few people on the planet. Slowy, his anxiety begins to evaporate.

One night he shocks his comrades y emptying the bag and *deliberately* electing the black marble. The next ight he does it again. From then on, ne simply strolls into the station ouse and nonchalantly requests the lack marble. He no longer has to ret over the possibility of losing the raw. For better or worse, he controls is destiny.

Ordeal now has been transformed into adventure, stress into excitement. The transformer is himself transformed, his uptightness replaced first by a kind of giddy rush, then by a buddhistic calm. Moreover, his daring, his abandon, his serenity, is contagious. Vice-squad headquarters gradually relaxes. Liberated, the whole damn place opens up to life.

And that, brothers and sisters, although Wambaugh probably didn't intend it, is crazy wisdom in action.

Admittedly, when the cop made the short straw his own, when he seized the nasty end of the stick and rode it to transcendence, he put himself in extra peril. That's par for the course. Only an airhead would mistake the left-handed path for a safe path.

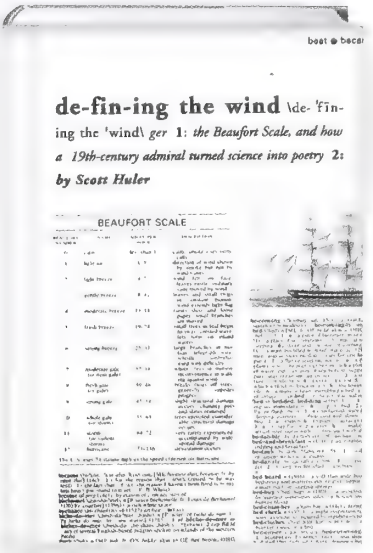
Although serious playfulness may be an effective means of domesticating fear and pain, it's not about meowing past the graveyard. No, the seriously playful individual meows right through the graveyard gate, meows into his or her very grave. When Oscar Wilde allegedly gestured at the garish wallpaper in his cheap Parisian hotel room and announced with his dying breath, "Either it goes or I go," he was exhibiting something beyond an irrepressibly brilliant wit. Freud, you see, wasn't whistling "Edelweiss" when he wrote that gallows humor is indicative of a greatness of soul.

The quips of the condemned prisoner or dying patient tower dramatically above, say, sallies on TV sitcoms by reason of their gloriously inappropriate refusal, even at life's most acute moment, to surrender to despair. The man who jokes in the executioner's face can be destroyed but never defeated.

When an eminent Zen master, upon hearing a sudden burst of squirrel chatter outside his window, sat up in his deathbed and proclaimed, "That's what it was all about!" his last words surpassed Wilde's in playful significance, constituting as they did a koan of sorts, an enigmatic invitation to rethink the meaning of existence. Anecdotes such as this one remind the nimble-minded that there's often a thin line between the comic and the cosmic, and that on that frontier can be found the doorway to psychic rebirth.

Ancient Egyptians believed that when a person died, the gods imme-

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—NOAH ADAMS, author of *The Flyers: In Search of Wilbur and Orville Wright*

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diately placed his or her heart in one pan of a set of scales. In the other pan was a feather. If there was imbalance, if the heart of the deceased weighed more than the feather, he or she was denied admittance to the afterworld. Only the lighthearted were deemed advanced enough to merit immortality.

Now, in a culture such as ours, where the tyranny of the dull mind holds sway, we can expect our intelligentsia to write off Egyptian heart-weighing as quaint superstition, to dismiss squirrel-chatter illumination as flaky Asian guru woo woo. Fine. But what about the Euro-American Trickster tradition, what about Coyote and Raven and Loki and Hermes and the community-sanctioned blasphemies of the clown princes of Saturnalia? For that matter, what about Dada, Duchamp, and the 'pataphysics of Alfred Jarry? What about *Gargantua* and *Finnegans Wake*, John Cage and Erik Satie, Gurdjieff and Robert Anton Wilson, Frank Zappa and Antoni Gaudi? What about Carlos Castaneda, Picasso, and the alchemists of Prague? Allen Ginsberg and R. D. Laing, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Lewis Carroll, Alexander Calder and Italo Calvino, Henry Miller, Pippi Longstocking, Andrei Codrescu, Ishmael Reed, Alan Rudolph, Mark Twain, and the electric Kool-Aid acid pranksters? What about the sly tongue-in-cheek subversions of Nietzsche (yes, Nietzsche!), and what about Shakespeare, for God's sake, the mega-bard in whose plays, tragedies included, three thousand puns, some of them real groaners, have been verifiably catalogued?

Obviously, although crazy wisdom may have been better appreciated in Asia, nuggets of meaningful playfulness have long twinkled here and there in the heavy iron crown of Western tradition. (It was a Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, who advised, "If they give you ruled paper, write the other way.") The question is, when will we be hip enough to realize that these sparklers aren't mere rhinestones or baubles of paste? When will our literati—in many cases, an erudite, superbly talented lot—evolve to the degree that they accord buoyancy and mirth a dime's worth of the respect they bestow so lavishly on gravity and misfortune?

Norman N. Holland asked a similar question in *Laughing: A Psychology of Humor*, concluding that comedy is deemed inferior to tragedy primarily because of the social prevalence of narcissistic pathology. In other words, people who are too self-important to laugh at their own frequently ridiculous behavior have a vested interest in gravity because it supports their illusions of grandiosity. According to Professor Donald Kuspit, many people are unable to function without such illusions.

"Capitalism," wrote Kuspit, "encourages the pathologically grandiose self because it encourages the conspicuous consumption of possessions which symbolize one's grandiosity." I would add that rigid, unquestioning allegiance to a particular religious or political affiliation is in much the same way also symptomatic of disease.

Ironically, it's this same malignant narcissism, revealing itself through arrogance, avarice, pique, anxiety, severity, defensive cynicism, and aggressive ambition, that is keeping the vainglorious out of their paradise. Among our egocentric sad sacks, despair is as addictive as heroin and more popular than sex, for the single reason that when one is unhappy one gets to pay a lot of attention to oneself. Misery becomes a kind of emotional masturbation. Taken out on others, depression becomes a weapon. But for those willing to reduce and permeate their ego, to laugh—or meow—into submission, heaven on earth is a distinct psychological possibility.

It's good to bear the preceding in mind when trying to comprehend the indignation with which the East Coast establishment greets work that dares to be both funny and deadly serious in the same breath. The left-handed path runs along terrain upon which the bowtiesattvas find it difficult to tread. Their maps are inaccurate and they have the wrong shoes. So, hi ho, hi ho, it's off to the house of woe they go.

Nobody requires a research fellowship to ascertain that most of the critically lauded fiction of our time concentrates its focus on cancer, divorce, rape, racism, schizophrenia, murder,

andonment, addiction, and abuse. hose things, unfortunately, are ram- nt in our society and ought to be amined in fiction. Yet to trot them t in book after book, on page after ge, without the transformative mag- of humor and imagination—let ne a glimmer of higher conscious- ss—succeeds only in impeding the vancement of literature and human derstanding alike.

Down in Latin America, they also rite about bad marriages and ill alth (as well as the kind of govern- ental brutality of which we in the nited States so far have had only a ste). The big difference, though, is at even when surveying the gritty d mundane aspects of daily life, atin novelists invoke the dream alm, the spirit realm, the mythic alm, the realm of nature, the inan- nate world, and the psychological nderworld. In acknowledging that cial realism is but one layer of a any-layered cake, in threading the nexplicable and the goofy into their aturalistic narratives, the so-called agical realists not only weave a more xpansive, inclusive tapestry but leave he reader with a feverish exaltation ather than the deadening weariness nat all too often accompanies the ompletion of even the most splen- idly crafted of *our* books.

Can we really take pride in a litera- ure whose cumulative effect is to send he reader to the bridge with "Good- ight Irene" on his lips?

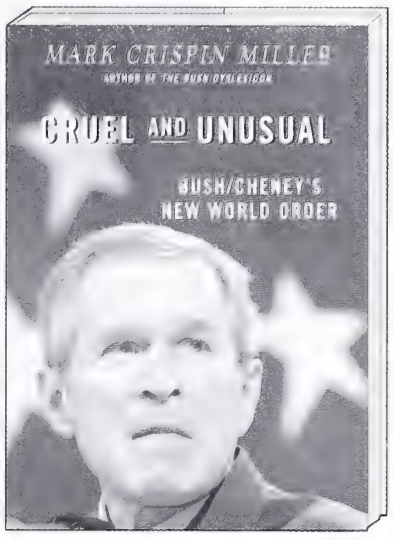
Freud said that wit is the denial of uffering. As I interpret it, he wasn't mplying that the witty among us leny the *existence* of suffering—all of us suffer to one degree or another— ut rather that, armed with a playful ttitude, a comic sensibility, we can leny suffering dominion over our ives, we can refrain from buying hares in the company. Funnel that defiant humor onto the page, add a racing shot of Zen awareness, and ey, pretty soon life has some justifi- cation for imitating art.

Don't misunderstand me: a novel is no more supposed to be a guidebook to universal happiness than a self- indulgent journal of the writer's per- sonal pain. And everyone will agree, I think, that crime is a more fascinating subject than lawful behavior, that dys- function is more interesting than sta- bility, that a messy divorce is ever so much more titillating than a placid marriage. Without conflict, both fic- tion and life can be a bore. Should that, however, prohibit the serious author from exploring and even extolling the world's pleasures, wonders, mysteries, and delights? (Maybe all this neurotic, cynical, cry-baby fiction is nothing more than the old classroom dictum "Write what you know" coming back to haunt us like a chalky ghost. If what you know best is angst, your education commands you not to waste a lot of time trying to create robust characters or describe con- ditions on the sunny side of the street.)

In any case, the notion that inspired play (even when audacious, offensive, or obscene) enhances rather than di- minishes intellectual rigor and spiritual fulfillment, the notion that in the eyes of the gods the tight-lipped hero and the wet-cheeked victim are frequent- ly inferior to the red-nosed clown, such notions are destined to be a hard sell to those who have E. M. Forster on their bedside table and a clump of dried narcissus up their ass. Not to worry. As long as words and ideas ex- ist, there will be a few misfits who will cavort with them in a spirit of *appro- fondement*—if I may borrow that mar- velous French word that translates roughly as "playing easily in the deep"—and in so doing they will oc- casionally bring to realization Kafka's belief that "a novel should be an ax for the frozen seas around us."

A Tibetan-caliber playfulness may not represent, I'm willing to concede, the only ice ax in the literary toolshed. Should there exist alternatives as avail- able, as effective, as potent, nimble, and refreshing, then by all means hone them and bring them down to the floe. Until I've seen them at work, howev- er, I'll stand by my contention that when it comes to writing, a fusion of prankish Asian wisdom, extra-dimen- sional Latin magic, and two-fisted North American poetic pizzazz (as ex- otic as that concept might seem to some) could be our best hope for clear- ing passageways through our heart- numbing, soul-shrinking, spirit-smoth- ering oceans of frost. We have a gifted, conscientious literati. Wouldn't it be the cat's meow to have an enlight- ened, exhilarating one as well? ■


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# THE INFLUENCE OF ANXIETY

## What's the problem with young adult novels?

*By Frances FitzGerald*

At the American Library Association convention each winter the adults who create the world of juvenile literature gather to confer and await announcement of the prestigious ALA awards and best-book lists for young people. The awards are a matter of some moment for publishers, because they can catapult books out of obscurity and give them long lives in print. The Newbery Medal for a distinguished work of literature for children virtually guarantees sales of 100,000 to parents and librarians, whether the kids like it or not. The Michael L. Printz award for excellence in young adult literature is the newest of these prizes. Established in 1999, it puts the ALA's final stamp of approval on the literature published for readers from twelve to eighteen, a literature just three decades old. The award has yet to have the venerable Newbery's effect on sales, and conceivably it never will, because teenagers read all kinds of books and make choices their parents and teachers would not necessarily approve of, even if they knew about them. Yet librarians have always tried their best to help kids make the right choices.

*Frances FitzGerald is the author of several books, including* America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century *and, most recently,* Vietnam: Spirits of the Earth, *with Mary Cross.*

Those who grew up before the 1970s may remember a few books with particular appeal for teenagers, such as *The Yearling*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *Catcher in the Rye*, but these were all published for adults. Today's teenagers can choose from thousands of novels written and published specifically for them—fantasy novels, sci-fi novels, historical novels, verse novels, graphic novels, and fundamentalist Christian novels, as well as poetry and non-fiction. No one knows exactly how many YA novels are published each year, but the *School Library Journal*, which does its best to find all juvenile books, reviewed 639 novels for the fifth grade and up in 2002. These days almost all school and public libraries have separate sections for YA books, as do the big bookstores, and many have YA specialists running them. In addition many middle schools teach the YA "classics," often as the only additions to the unchanging fare of *Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Of Mice and Men*. No YA novel has approached the phenomenal sales of the Harry Potter books (which were published for children), but some have sold more than 100,000 copies in hardback and millions in paper. In the past couple of years Michael Chabon, Joyce Carol Oates, Francine Prose, and several other well-known authors have published YA novels.

Still, like the world of adolescence generally, YA literature is, as one historian remarked, something of a secret garden, or a ghetto. Parents know about children's literature, but they don't often read the older kids' books. The reviews appear almost exclusively in publications for librarians and booksellers and in small journals of juvenile literature, such as *The Horn Book*. The reviewers are almost all YA librarians and other specialists. Few critics of adult literature know the names, much less the work, of the authors the specialists admire. Thus YA editors, booksellers, and librarians are the sole gatekeepers to this domain, and the librarians, the arbiters of literary merit.

In addition to giving the Printz award, the American Library Association each year issues a list of recommendations for librarians across the country, and at the ALA convention in Philadelphia in 2003 some of the best-attended meetings were the open sessions of the committee choosing the Best Books for Young Adults. When the ALA inaugurated the committee in 1966, the idea was to select adult books that were suitable for teenagers, there being few

ks written specifically for them. e committee, however, had ked at more than 400 books—ion, non-fiction, and poetry—al-st all of them published for read- from twelve to eighteen. In ail discussions over the course of year, the committee members l eliminated half of them. At the nvention they had to winnow t list to a final 75 books, and, ted around a table at the front of uge conference room, they went their task with enthusiasm.

The members of the committee, rteen women and two men, bore resemblance to the forbidding li-rians of my school days. Most were their thirties or forties, and those o were older would not have looked t of place at a peace demon-ation. All were casually essed, and they passed ound economy-size boxes of okies, crackers, and candies they leafed through the piles paper in front of them. The scussion was informal, some-nes heated and sometimes nctuated with jokes and ots of laughter. As a part of e exercise they had solicited views from teenagers, and m time to time they would ad out teen comments, such , "That eighth-grade boy has e voice of an adult woman," "The book was too long and ring." Then, because getting ens to read anything outside e classroom is half of the bat-e as far as librarians are con-rned, they gave as many ints for popularity as for uality. For that reason the cond in a best-selling series alled *Gossip Girls* was still on e list. In the animated, half-dible discussion I heard:

"Teens love it. It's fun and 's a little nasty."

"Everyone loves this. Pam-ered, spoiled, filthy rich kids re fun to read about."

"It has no redeeming feature. It's nallow and I don't care for all these dvertisements in fiction. Brand-name neakers and . . ."

"That just adds to its authenticity. t makes it real for kids."

"Can a book be delicious fun and still a good book?"

"They've got their YA heads on," a librarian next to me laughed.

In the end, however, the committee voted the book down.

If the committee members had been feeling a bit punchy by that time, it would have been understandable. During the course of the year they had rejected novels that involved, among other things, psychic wolves in Transylvania, a young dancer with rheumatoid arthritis, a girl warrior battling Druids, a boy who spends two days on an LSD trip, a twelve-year-old leper in a lawless Hawaiian leper colony, a girl who develops a crush on Columbus while disguised as his ship's boy, a girl who runs away with a competitive skateboarder and returns to find a tornado has destroyed her home, a boy who gets stuck in time with Benjamin Franklin, a Nanjing girl who in 1911 learns martial arts and goes to Cornell University, and a boy who discovers that his psychopathic father has populated their new community with androids and clones. And they still had to vote on novels about characters such as a boy with cerebral palsy who falls in love with a druggy, and a girl who finds employment as a nuclear-reactor maintenance technician on the bleak planet of Fieldstar and falls for the mysterious master of Thorrastone Park.

"I'm not a big fan of *Jane Eyre*," one librarian said when the last book came up, "but I liked this novel."

YA literature is marvelously various—almost dizzyingly so—but it has some distinct limitations. For one thing, publishers and librarians define YA literature not as all books that might appeal to teens but specifically as books with teen protagonists and teen perspectives. "Teenagers today want to read about teenagers today," S. E. Hinton, a YA progenitor, famously pronounced. What this means is that there are no modern versions of books like *Scaramouche*, the Horatio Hornblower series, and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*—all the great adventure stories written for older kids in the past. It means moreover that many kinds of stories with appeal for young people, as for example spy and detective stories, cannot be told—or at least not very well. There's a corollary to the Hinton dictum, and that is that teens want to read about teens they can *identify* with. The result is that most historical novels are anachronistic, and some of them hilariously so. "Corpus Bones!" cries the thirteenth-century heroine of a popular Newbery Honor Book. "I utterly loathe my life!" The Hinton corollary applies to fantasy literature as well, so in the past year YA authors have produced both a lady knight and a goth New Jersey teen fairy.




lustration by Leigh Wells

Like teen culture generally, YA literature is largely an American phenomenon. British and other European authors tend to write for children, or for people of all ages (though this is changing)—and contemporary realism is the dominant American genre. These days a great deal of fantasy is written for, or targeted at, the YA market in the United States. But this is a relatively new development, and many of the best writers are British. Still, here as elsewhere the genre is a rich and various one, ranging from modern versions of traditional fairy tales, myths, and legends (including those of Native Americans) to philosophical alternate-world epics to family dramas involving time travel, ghosts, or other paranormal phenomena. Then, too, fantasy encompasses many different kinds of stories. David Almond's *Skellig* is, for example, a Blakean metaphysical musing, Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* is a psychological thriller, and Tamora Pierce's *Lady Knight* is a coming-of-age novel describing war, politics, and diplomacy in down-to-earth terms. In fact, fantasy seems to be the repository for all the story types that cannot, or simply do not, exist in other YA genres.

American writers produce a good deal of YA science fiction, yet, strangely enough, few take advantage of the latitude allowed by the genre. Since the 1970s, young adult science fiction has had little to do with the wonders of science, intergalactic travel, or new worlds in space. Most of the novels are dystopias in the tradition of *Brave New World*—not incidentally one of the books most widely taught in American high schools. Like the originals, many are cautionary tales about regimented, conformist societies or about the social order collapsed into barbarism.

With all of the historical fiction, fantasy, and sci-fi published for young adults, the most extensive genre is contemporary realism, or stories about teenagers today. More than a hundred such novels are published each year in this country, and, remarkably, most of them belong to a single story type. The narrative pattern—to take two recent examples—is traumatic/therapeutic: fifteen-year-old boy, isolated at home and at school, decides to join his dead twin brother by burning down the school but finds a sense of belonging on the wrestling team; fifteen-year-old girl hospitalized for self-mutilation stops cutting herself when she finds she's not responsible for her younger brother's asthma and that her parents are not the hopeless neurotics they seem to be. This kind of story has many possible permutations, but not an infinite number, so within the past year or so there have been two novels about pyromania, three about teenage boys bringing up their children alone, and four about kids discovering that a parent is having an affair.

This is what is known as the problem novel. It's the form most coming-of-age stories have taken for the past thirty years, and for many YA critics and historians it is the very definition of young adult literature.

Historically speaking, realism has always been the American genre. Until college students imported J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis from England in the 1960s, there was no fantasy for older kids, and for most of this country's history there was no fantasy at all. The Puritans, after all, believed that children should learn piety and, beyond that, useful information. To them, as one historian put it, fiction was untrue, therefore a lie, and therefore wicked as well as a waste of time. As for fairy tales, they were seen as irrational and morally repugnant vestiges of the pagan past. In England the Puritans never managed to extirpate works of the imagination, and by the mid-nineteenth century writers such as Lewis Carroll and Charles Kingsley were creating new worlds of fantasy for kids. But in this country the Puritan influence went deeper and lasted much longer. As late as the 1860s many American schoolmasters still decried fairy tales, and even in the 1950s fantasy—largely whimsical tales and sweet animal stories—was for children only. Older kids were supposed to read realistic stories with more or less well-camouflaged instructions on how to become responsible adults.

In the United States novels for kids began to appear in the mid-nineteenth century. By then the Calvinist reign was over, but the novels still spoke to the Puritan conception of childhood as a state of barbarous nature and to the Puritan view about the purpose of juvenile literature. That is, most were instructive stories about boys and girls living adventurous, undisciplined childhoods and growing up into pious, industrious adults. Boys grew up to make good, as in the Horatio Alger stories. Girls grew up to do good by learning their place and their duties within the household. By the end of the century some had become angelic creatures, like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, spreading sweetness and light all around them. (Mark Twain, it should be noted, wrote for adults.)

Around 1920, as concepts of childhood changed, juvenile novels entered a phase that one historian characterizes as that of "idealized realism." In the new books boys and girls often grew up in straitened circumstances or under frontier conditions, but still childhood, all the way up to the age of eighteen, was portrayed as a happy, protected stage of life—a realm of innocence that would be lost.

The childhood-as-golden-age novel lasted through the early 1960s, though by then the families tended to be middle class and the stories not of hard work and making-do but of school, sports, and first romances. Two decades after "the teenager" became a distinct species and well after Hollywood had discovered juvenile delinquency, Jimmy Dean and rock and roll, most novels for teens still clove to the idealist model of kids growing up in safe, nurturing families to become fine, upstanding members of their close-knit communities. "In the early sixties I could write the jacket copy without reading the book," Susan Hirschman, a recently retired editor, told me. "Josh overcomes adversity with the help of his family, develops good values, and grows to maturity." With few exceptions the voices in the novels were those of adults talking about adolescents.

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This all changed in 1967 and 1968 with the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Robert Lipsyte's *The Contender*, and Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*. *The Outsiders*, written by Hinton when she was sixteen, is about class tensions and gang warfare in an apparently typical American town; *The Contender*, about a Harlem kid who pulls himself out of the dangerous landscape of gangs, crime, and drugs; and *The Pigman*, about a boy and a girl, both with dysfunctional parents, who take up with a local eccentric and become responsible for his death. These books defied all the conventions governing language, social terrain, family life, and adolescent behavior. Others soon followed.

YA specialists attribute the breakthrough to the social and cultural rebellions going on at the time. They're not wrong. But authors of children's readers and picture books had broken stodgy Dick-and-Jane conventions much earlier, Dr. Seuss with *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957 and Maurice Sendak with *Where the Wild Things Are* in 1962. Then in 1964 Louise Fitzhugh transformed the literature for somewhat older children with *Harriet the Spy*, a novel about a stubborn eleven-year-old with a voice of her own and a satirical view of her parents and the shrink they send her to. In fact, the kids' literature conventions were broken successively as the baby boomers grew up—though, with the exception of Hinton, it was not they but writers of the previous generation who transformed the literature. As the historian Leonard Marcus wrote, "Children's books mirror the society from which they arise; children always get the books their parents deserve."

In 1965, Nat Hentoff and George Woods, then the children's book editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, began to complain that kids' novels were hypocritical and unrealistic. They called for books that described society as it was and addressed such problems as addiction, illegitimacy, and discrimination. (The same year Nancy Larrick wrote an influential article in *The Saturday Review*, "The All-White World of Children's Books.") Very quickly they got what they asked for—and with remarkably little resistance from librarians or parents.

In the mid sixties new middle and high schools sprang up all over the country. Title II of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act poured money into their empty libraries, permitting publishers to reissue the older children's-literature classics and to publish a host of new novels for adolescents, almost all of which were in the new realist mode.

In the late sixties and early seventies authors including M. E. Kerr, Richard Peck, Katherine Paterson, Judy Blume, and Robert Cormier, as well as Hinton, Lipsyte, and Zindel, produced many of what are now considered the classics of YA literature. Their novels, the models for all that followed, have strong narratives with minimal descriptions of characters or places and little in the way of imagery or metaphor. In them teens speak their own language, often in the immediacy of the present tense. Their voices are sometimes dry and matter-of-fact, sometimes full of emotional intensity, and sometimes funny, but always they create a world apart from adults. Zindel and many other writers borrowed unashamedly from *Catcher in the Rye*—and even today many novels echo the familiar angst-filled voice of a sensitive lonely kid near the edge of a nervous breakdown.

In the literature of the 1950s coming of age meant joining adult society, but in the new books the protagonists were inward-looking. Their problems were personal, and their coming of age entailed an adjustment of a purely psychological nature: coping with grief, gaining self-esteem, and so forth. Richard Peck's novel *Are You in the House Alone?* serves as an illustration just because it has a broader scope. On one level it's a piece of social criticism about the successful efforts of a small suburban town to hush up a brutal rape. But the focus is on the girl, and she's helpless except in that she finds the strength to refuse to feel psychologically victimized. Like this girl, the protagonists of these novels are alone in dealing with their problems and their inner turmoil. Parents, and sometimes all adults, are either useless or the cause of the problem.

In the 1950s literature boys could become heroes by making the last touchdown or saving someone from drowning; girls could become shining moral examples to their friends. But in these novels the kids were simply survivors. Some survived wilderness ordeals—a genre known to the British as Robinsnades—but by far the greatest number survived psychologically in urban or suburban settings. In the works of Robert Cormier they didn't even do that.

Among YA specialists—teachers, librarians, and critics—Cormier is by far the most admired writer. There's hardly any dissent on this score, though he's high on hyperbole, and no one I talked with seemed able to describe what he was up to in the novels generally regarded as his best. For example, in *The Chocolate War*, the most celebrated of all YA novels, published in 1974, Cormier tells the story of a fourteen-year-old boy—another Holden Caulfield sound-alike, complete with neuroses—who is physically and spiritually crushed when he resists an evil gang and an evil headmaster, Brother Leon, who together have taken over his Catholic high school. Many YA specialists see this as a political novel and a lesson about the need to resist illegitimate authority. Some see it as a tragedy. But it's not a political novel, because Cormier does not show how the gang and Brother Leon manage to take over the nice suburban school. And it's not a tragedy, because the protagonist, Jerry, is just a sad, lonely kid who can't do anything about the takeover. If there is any lesson in the book, it seems to be that those who resist illegitimate authority will be crushed. Only one critic I know of, Sheila Egoff, has understood this novel: Cormier, a devout Catholic, has put the Devil in control. As for Jerry, he is the Lamb sacrificed for the sins of the world.

Cormier had no intention of writing for young adults, and although

ıe has been much praised for breakng the taboo on unhappy endings, ıo other author has brought a proagonist to such disastrous ends. We have to give kids hope," one 'A specialist explained. All the ame, Jerry and Cormier's other oomed teenagers are not alone in he literature. In virtually all probem novels—as in *Catcher in the 'ye*—the teenagers are the ones vho suffer, and as badly as they may ehave, the fault lies not with them. hey suffer for the sins of their parnts or the society at large.

Writing in the 1970s the authors ıay have meant this message to be aken literally, but whatever their ntentions, the idea that it's the ıdults who have screwed up has obvious appeal for teenagers of any period.

In the 1970s not only did the new 'A literature meet little resistance ut many younger librarians adopted : as a cause. Whereas in the past teen ooks had been celebrated for the fine xamples their upstanding heroes gave young people, the new books were praised for their "relevance," "iconoclasm," and "subversiveness." As one enthusiast later wrote, "We YA librarians were conscious of being at the crux of something important as we banded together against the people we called 'the old biddies' who ran our libraries."

The first wave of YA novels was followed by a veritable flood. A lot of this work was formula stuff: novels based not on characters but on *issues*—drugs, premarital sex, delinquency, divorce. The librarians disapproved on literary grounds. The kids, however, inhaled these books, because, although overtly moralistic, they described the forbidden or the unspoken in titillating, though rarely graphic, terms. The most sensational of them, *Go Ask Alice*, a book purporting to be the posthumous diary of an anonymous teenage druggy, has sold more than four million copies and continues to sell.

In the eighties, YA authors continued to turn out problem novels and dystopias but faced a new challenge in the form of slickly packaged romance series, such as Bantam Dell's Sweet Valley High, which outsold them by orders of magnitude. In his history of young adult literature, *From Romance to Realism*, Michael Cart suggests that this might have been a reaction to the books of the seventies or a reflection of the conservative times. He also points out that this development coincided with a period of dramatic change in juvenile publishing.

In the 1980s Title II funds dried up, and the malling of America and the chaining of the bookstores made lasting alterations in the market. Publishers who once had sold 80 percent of their juvenile novels to libraries and through the schools came to sell 50 percent to 80 percent of them through bookstores and other commercial outlets, such as drugstores and 7-Elevens. Librarians lost much of their hold on the market, and juvenile publishing, once a quiet, slow business built on back-list sales, became as much of a boom-or-bust enterprise as adult


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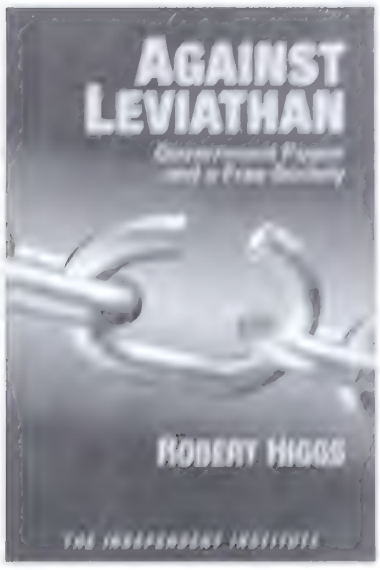
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pregnancy but a brother who dies in a kayak accident; not just anorexia but a boyfriend who shoots himself in the head with a rifle. One editor told me he'd worked on a novel about brutal ice hockey that was praised for its "sensitive treatment of necrophilia."

How do kids survive their predicaments? Interestingly, the solutions haven't changed as much as the problems have. Art is one way: more than half of these kids are budding writers or painters. Nature is another, though the healing powers of nature aren't quite what they were in the sixties. Leaving town sometimes helps. Religion rarely brings salvation except in the very popular pre-Armageddon novels by Tim LaHaye, a spin-off of his series for adults. Sports can be a help but only in the sense of teamwork: the will to win is not seen as helpful at all. Love helps, sex does not—and any reader looking for steaminess should go to the adult shelves. In one novel I found the solution to incest was to have the brother join the Marines, but this may have been an act of desperation on the author's part. It's the only book I know of in which anything positive came of joining the armed forces. Occasionally, a mom or dad shapes up and gets behind the kid; more often a sibling, a friend, an uncle, or a coach provides support and helps the kid realize what his parents have done to him. Psychotherapy, however, is up there with art as a means of survival, and, as is rarely the case in adult fiction these days, the therapist is a benevolent figure who, like the High Priest in *The Magic Flute*, appears at the end to set matters to rights.

Some of these themes find their way into historical novels and romances. In a 2001 book set in the 1920s a twelve-year-old girl runs away to get away from her mother and abusive stepfather and find happiness in Oregon with a Chinese-Nez Perce head [illegible] in the New Jersey girl's room [illegible] has a human mother [illegible] rescued from an abusive relationship.

Three editors I talked with [illegible] the reason the publishing [illegible]


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become so dire is that the books have to compete for attention in the chain stores. Others indignantly rejected such an explanation.

Librarians and other YA specialists have, of course, noticed the increasing grimness of the literature, but they continue to support the genre strongly and indeed find virtues in it that the average adult reader would surely miss. For one thing, many if not most specialists maintain that the novels realistically depict the problems adolescents face these days. "Many of our teens lead grim lives," a librarian from Holland, Michigan, wrote in a listserv discussion of the subject last spring. "YA literature reflects what they and their classmates are living." Clearly the specialists are right that problems from drug addiction to child abuse do exist, and most kids know about them, but they often speak as if what they call "edgy fiction" or "gritty realism" reflects the lives of most young people—and they tend to overlook the kids who read these books out of sheer curiosity.

Chris Crutcher, a respected YA author and the winner of an ALA lifetime achievement award, told me that in his travels around the country he often comes across kids who identify with his characters, including those who are suicidal or who have suffered abuse. Acknowledging that not all kids have such problems, he said, "We operate on a continuum. We all have pieces of feeling lonely or angry or scared." He added, "The intimacy a reader has with a character is a hugely healing thing. The understanding 'I am not alone' opens new possibilities." Crutcher has worked as a family therapist, and in that sense he's an exception, yet most YA specialists will tell you that young readers are looking for help, and that the novels can provide it. According to the sole textbook on the subject, *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, the value of the novels is to enable young readers to "talk in the third person about the problems with which they are concerned," to give them the "confidence that should they meet particular problems they will be able to solve them," and to reassure them "by showing them they are not the only ones with fears and doubts."

In other words, problem novels are good for kids, therapeutic. Perhaps they are in some cases, but as a general proposition this is nineteen-thirties—or eighteen-thirties—Freudianism turned on its head.

Roger Sutton, the editor of the *Horn Book* and a scholar of children's literature, takes a different view of the whole subject. In the first place, as he rightly observes, most problem novels aren't really dark. "There's a lot of apparent grimness, just like there's a lot of apparent sex." In these books, he said, "you can safely identify with the protagonists, because they're basically good kids and they are going to pull themselves out of whatever thicket they're in." True, he said, the publishers have been upping the ante, but there's always a happy ending or a silver lining. And how realistic is that? "These books are melodramas and kids read them that way. Take the child-abuse books, for example. They're read by girls who have relatively happy families, who love the dramas and can believe them—but only as fairy tales, as heightened, exaggerated versions of their own small conflicts with their parents." In that sense, he said, the books do connect with the issues kids have, but "once kids acquire the reading skills, they read just like adults, and therefore there's always a disparity between the precautionary or therapeutic intention and the result."

In Sutton's view didacticism finds its way into all kids' literature. "Adults," he said, want to communicate good values to the next generation, or they want to give kids help and guidance, so they write differently than they do for adults. "They can't help it." Currently, Sutton said, there's a trend toward publishing more complex narratives in a more sophisticated style for older teens, "but the kids won't read them, because they say, 'I'm literature and I'm good for you.'" In Sutton's opinion YA literature will always be for eleven- to fourteen-year-olds.

Sutton is surely right that kids read like adults. On Amazon.com and other websites that publis reader reviews, kids comment o such matters as plotting, pacing and style. ("Her talent is in creatin and supporting magical places an people while at the same time keep ing situations and characters inte esting and realistic.") They discus how well the characters are drawn ("Why is Neal suddenly out of th picture? and why is Kel falling fo the big dumb red-headed Cleon? keep asking myself these question and no reasonable answers come t mind.") They summarize plots. ("H fights with his tuba, which reall isn't a tuba at all, but a frog pre tending to be a tuba." "Its not jus about saving owls there is a lot mor to the story.") They talk about hov a story affects them. ("I really like the part when Roy mooned Dana. "The book took me on a journe that filled me with sadness.") The also take notice of what authors do ("The author uses great word choic es.") And they sum up books as crit ics do ("funny, mystifying and dar ing," "amazing, chilling, heart felt") In fact the only difference betwee young and adult reviewers is tha the young have fewer points of com parison. ("THIS IS THE BES BOOK I'VE EVER READ." "omg it so amazing.") Still, if a book doesn' please them ("In all honesty thi book is lame"), they'll throw it asid and go on to something else.

As reviews show, some kids lik problem novels—or the ones they'v encountered—and generally, i seems, for the same reasons that the like other books. ("It is a book abou child abuse, but it's written in a wa that is funny.") Some react as the YA enthusiasts hope. ("i felt like it totall ly understood me and it had all th anger i was repressing.") Some don't ("a boring book. . . . There were a lo of dry spots.") On the whole kid seem to prefer books that don't throw the moral in their face. ("I liked th book because it was real and not fak like what people want to hear.") An as book sales show, kids choose ad venture tales, chick lit, and fantas over problem novels and exemplar dystopias. This should not be surpris ing. Just ask kids which they like bet ter, Thanksgiving or Halloween.

# COMMISSION

*By Tim Winton*

The day after her diagnosis Mum sent me in search of the old man. She'd lain awake all night thinking, and she told me she just wanted to see him again before she died. Although it was five in the morning, she knew I'd be awake. I couldn't believe what she was asking me to do—it was such a long shot, so unlikely that it felt cruel—but in the circumstances I had neither the heart nor the presence of mind to turn her down. I got out a map of Western Australia and studied it over a breakfast I had to force down with several coffees. I left messages at the office, kissed my sleepy wife goodbye, and drove out of the city with the rising sun in my eyes.



We hadn't seen my father in fifteen years. I didn't know where he was or what he was doing. The only piece of information Mum had armed me with was the name of a bush pub in the eastern goldfields. It was there on the map, Sam's Patch. The pub seemed to be the town. It was the last known address. As I drove I held the folded map to my face a moment and smelled the classrooms of my childhood.

I was too tired to be driving any serious distances that day, but I fought to stay alert. At the outskirts of the city, the foothills and the forests still bore signs of the week's drought-breaking storms. Road crews were out and men took chain saws to fallen trees. A couple of hours east, machines were seeding wheat paddocks. Water lay in culverts at the roadside and birds gathered to wash themselves, hardly stirring as I passed. I drove until farms gave way to red earth and salmon gums, until the sun was behind me and the towns were mostly ruins amid the slag heaps of mines long abandoned. Even out here, in staticky waves, the radio spewed scandal from the ongoing royal commission into police corruption.

Up past Kalgoorlie I turned off the highway onto a thin bitumen road that wound between old mineheads and diggings until it petered out among the remains of a ghost town. All that was left standing was the Sam's Patch pub, and before I reached it I pulled over and switched off the engine to think a minute. The hours on the road hadn't given me any more ideas about what to say or how to act. I'd concentrated so hard on staying awake that I was nearly numb, and I sat there with the motor ticking and the window wound down long enough to feel queasy again at the thought of what I'd agreed to do. If this was it, if the old man was really in there, what sort of state would he be in after all this time? I tried to think in purely practical terms; I couldn't afford to feel much now. I had to consider the practical details of managing him, of cajoling and threatening and maintaining him for the time it took to deliver him as

*Tim Winton is the author of seven novels and two story collections. His third collection,* The Turning, *will be published next year. He lives in Australia.*

Illustration by Alan Baker

promised. He took me. I'd deal with later. But I dreaded it. Good how I decided. But I'd never been violent. I wasn't afraid in that sense. It was the fear of some kind of how things were. Drunken and public, take everything out of you all your patience, all your time and will. You often and obscene and compensate and endure until they've eaten you alive, and afterward, when you think you're finally free of it for good, it's hard not to be angry at the prospect of dealing with the squalor again. There was no point in being furious at my mother for declining this, but I couldn't help myself.

I drove up and pulled onto the blue-metal apron in front of the pub. It was a fine old building with stone walls and brick quoins and wide verandas, stained with red dust and hung with harrows and wagon wheels and paraphernalia of the gold rushes. When I got out and stood stiff in the sunshine, a blue heeler stirred on the steps, and behind it, in the shadows of the veranda, an old man put his hat on but did not rise. I licked my lips, summoned what I could of my professional self, and strode over.

Before the dog reached me I could see that the man was not my father. His low growl turned the heeler in its tracks. I stumped up onto the veranda almost faint with relief.

'I'm looking for Bob Lane,' I said without preamble.

'And who would you be, then?' asked the old bloke. He had the ruined nose and watery eyes of a dedicated drinker. His hat was a tattered relic of the last world war.

'I'm Jesson.'

'Honest Bob's?' 'And you're the son.'

'You know where he is?'

The old cove nodded, his lips pursed. In the top pocket of his overalls was a spectacles case, which he fished out in order to survey me.

'Must look more like your mother,' he muttered.

I shrugged. I felt awkward standing there, my pressed gabardine and pillbox. The old fellow considered me. 'Comes with anyone.'

'Yes, my wife.'

'No.' I frowned.

'He's a good bloke is Bob.'

I nodded. 'I know he is.'

I knew and he knew I knew it to be true, but acknowledging it was painful.

The old bloke hauled himself up with a crepe [illegible] and opened the screen door. 'In he went in he thunder, but let us for his benefit, and I followed him in to a hall like room that combined the emporium, pub, bar, and community hall.

'This your pub?'

'Nup. I live out the back.' He mumbled his day off.

At the bar he took up a blank pad and the stub of a pencil whose lead he licked before drawing me a map and a route out to a destination he labeled 'BOB'S CAMP.'

Bob the Banker, he said, roaming the paper off and passing it to me. 'There he is.'

'And this is us here.'

'That's us.'

I straightened up and looked at the rows of bottles behind the bar. It occurred to me that it might be useful to arrive with supplies. I felt the bloke watching me, and I don't know whether it was his undisguised interest or the bitterness I felt at having to even contemplate such a thing after all my mother had been through, but I decided I must take my leave at all, and so great was my relief at the decision that, as I folded up his helpful scrap of paper, I thought I saw a flicker of respect in the other man's eyes, the utter low of which lasted all the way to the car.

I drove on up the thin black road while until I found the dirt turnoff indicated by the pencil map. The track was broad but muddy from the recent rains, and when I turned into it the car felt sluggish and skittish by turns. I really had to concentrate to keep from sliding off into the scrub. [illegible] the earth was red, almost purple. Set against the [illegible] colored eucalypts and the gray-blue [illegible] seemed [illegible] They looked [illegible] I had expected a desert vista, something rocky and open with [illegible] This was [illegible] heaps and small trees, was almost [illegible] the [illegible]

[illegible] windscreen. Wrestling the wheel, I drove for half an hour until I came to a junction marked with a doorless fridge. It corresponded to my pencil map; I turned north. Five minutes later I turned off onto a slippery, rutted track that ended in a four way fork. After some hesitation I took the most northerly trail and drove slowly through old diggings and the pale blocks of fallen walls. The car wallowed through shimmering puddles, and the track narrowed until salt bush chissed against the doors.

I'd begun to sweat and curse and look for some way of turning back when I saw a dull tin roof and the rusted stub of a windmill among the salmon gums. A dog began to bark. I eased into the clearing, where a jumble of makeshift buildings and car bodies was scattered, and the moment I saw the man striding from the trees beyond, I knew it was him. I stalled the car and did not start it again. I was dimly aware of the dog crashing against the door, pressing itself across the glass at my shoulder. It really was the old man. He was taller than I remembered, and I was startled by the way he carried himself, the unexpected dignity of him. All my manly determination deserted me. I uttered a shameful little Oh! of surprise. It was all I could do to unstrap myself and lurch out of the vehicle so as not to be sitting when he arrived. The dog clambered at my legs, but at the old man's [illegible] whistle it desisted and ran to his side. For fear of looking tastidious I refrained from brushing the muddy paw prints from my jumper and jeans. I leaned on the speckled hood of the car, folding and unfolding my arms. He came on through the knee high saltbush, and when he reached me and the red dog sat as instructed, I saw that he was sober. I saw the wattles of his neck, the sun lesions on his arms, the black filaments of work in his hands, and the braces that held up his pants. He wore an ancient [illegible] hat, a faded work shirt, and steel-capped boots more scarred than his face, melancholy face. His eyes were startled but clear.

'Is it your mother?'

Yes, I said.

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Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (Constantinople), Turkey

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What do you need?

She wants to see you.

He looked past me then and took a long breath. The dog whined and watched him.

You better come in. If you want to.

Will you come? I asked, angry at how sick with love I was at the very sight of him.

Of course, he murmured. If she asked.

She asked.

I have to . . . I need to organize myself.

How long will it take?

I have to think.

It's a long drive.

You'll need a cup of tea.

He turned toward the dwelling and I followed him. By the time I reached the cement slab of his veranda my shoes were ruined. He directed me to an armchair beneath the sagging tin roof where I kicked off the shoes. I felt strangely short of breath, and when I followed him indoors I was unprepared for how strongly the shack smelled of him. It was not an unpleasant odor, that mix of shaving soap, leathery skin, and sweat, but the sudden familiarity of it overwhelmed me. It was the scent of a lost time, how my father smelled before the funk of antacids and the peppermints that never quite hid the stink of booze. I nearly fell into the wooden chair he pulled out for me. While he stoked up the old stove and set the blackened kettle on it I tried to compose myself.

The shack was a one-room bush-pole construction with a corrugated iron roof and walls. In three walls were mismatched timber windows whose panes were scrubbed clean. At one end stood an iron bed and a rough bookshelf, and at the other was the wood stove set back in its tin fireplace. Between them, where I sat, was a deal table and two chairs. Black billies and pots hung from a wall. A steel sink was set into a jarrah frame. The hand-poured cement floor was swept. There were photographs of my mother and me above the bed, and one of him in uniform. I felt him watch as I took them in. Myself at fourteen, all teeth and hair and hope. And my mother barely thirty, smiling and confident.

And Angie? I asked despite myself.

The old man pointed back to the doorway, where, above the lintel, a faded shot of my dead sister hung like an icon. A chubby toddler in a red jumpsuit.

How long have you lived like this?

Sober? he said, misunderstanding me. Ten years.

Ten years, I said.

He clamped his jaw and looked down, but there was an involuntary pride in his posture as I repeated his words.

I have to see to things. Before I go.

Okay.

It's too dangerous driving back in the dark, he said. There'll be roos all over the road. Can you wait till morning?

I had hoped to head back today, I said, realizing as I did so that if we left now we wouldn't reach the city until the early hours. After last night Mum would be in no fit state, and the drive was probably beyond me.

You're welcome to stay here. But there's rooms back at the pub if you'd rather not.

I'll stay, I said after something of a pause.

The kettle boiled. He made tea and cut up some damper. We sat awhile blowing steam—he from his tin mug and me from the china cup he'd given me. I tried the damper with the butter he brought in from the kero fridge, and it was good.

You coming like this, he said. It's . . .

It's sudden, I said.

He nodded sadly, as though that was not what he'd been about to say.

How do you live? I asked.

Don't need much out here. Get the pension. I look after things, hold things for people.

Bob the Banker, I said, trying not to sound ironic.

Yeah.

What things?

Oh, money. Gold. Valuables. You know, people's deeds and wills.

What people?

There's a few blokes here and there still prospecting. Some of them just pretending these days. Often as not just drinking or going off their rockers and lying low. Old sandalwooders, fetchers, some strays and runaways. Don't trust each other. Don't trust 'emselves anymore. So they leave stuff with me.

They trust you, then.

Yes.

Why you?

The question affronted him, but the old man seemed determined not to take offence.

Well, because I don't drink. Because . . . because I'm trustworthy.

Honest Bob, I murmured, ashamed at the bitterness in my voice. But it was so hard to sit there and see him after so much time, in the wake of such disappointment and creeping shame. I'd had years of boyhood bewilderment and then, once I was old enough to see it, a decade of fury at how my mother suffered. In the end there was only a closed-down resignation, the adult making-do that I'd grown into. And now I had to sit with him and hear him declare himself trustworthy.

Once upon a time it had been true. Sergeant Bob Lang. He'd been straight as a die, and what you saw was what you got. As a boy I believed in him the way I believed in God. But during my adolescence he underwent a long, puzzling decline. His fall from grace was so slow and gradual. At some point he ceased to be the man we thought he was. Yet even at his lowest he was never rough or deliberately unkind; if he had been, it would have been easier to shut off from him. There was no visible crisis, no great outburst, only new distance brought on by the secret boozing. He just disappeared by degrees before our eyes, subsiding into a private disillusionment I never understood. When my mother discovered the drinking she, in turn, hid it from me for fear I would lose respect for him. She turned herself inside out to protect us both. And at such cost.

In the end there was no hiding the problem. For years I tried to understand, to make allowances, until none of his slippery addict excuses worked on me anymore. If he hadn't bolted when he did I would have thrown him out for my mother's sake. I was, my wife says, an old man at twenty-five. By the time we met I was rigid, like a man poisoned. It was the lies that wrecked me, so many innocuous untruths, thousands of tiny doses over the years that gathered toxicity until something in

e gave out. I lost all tolerance; I was
) longer capable of forgiveness. If
ail hadn't come along with her vast,
structive capacity to forgive, I won-
:r what would have become of me. I
ight have tried to reinvent myself
/ sheer force of will, but without her
would have come to nothing. I have,
1 my great surprise, stumbled upon a
)od life. But my mother was too stub-
)rn, too loyal, to move on. And now
e was dying unchanged, fierce with
)peless love, and I was a breath away
)m screaming it all back in the old
an's face.

He drank his tea, and the after-
)on light slanted across the table
:tween us. After some time he
eared his throat.

I have to see some people, he mur-
ured. Before I leave. In case there's
ıy misunderstanding.

You want me to drive you?

Well, it would be quicker. It's too
ucky for the push-bike.

All right, then. We'll go now.

He brought me an old pair of Blund-
)nes. They were soft with use and
lt strange on my feet. The insoles
:re indented by his toes and sunk at
e heels. We left the dog behind and
:wed up muddy tracks for an hour or
)re, stopping well clear of humpies
ıd dongas in the long shadows of dig-
ngs while the old man went in to
nsult people who were never more
an silhouettes to my eye. Their
vellings were scrap tin and ragwall.
ne bloke lived in an orange school
ıs that had sprouted lean-tos and out-
ıildings. While my father was in the
ıs with him I walked out through
:nches and disused shafts to an aban-
)ned hut. I was fed up waiting in the
r, and the old place had caught my
e. On the dirt floor was a rusty bed-
:ad. The hessian lining of the walls
ıd come away to pool on the dirt.
ıe single room was stacked with emp-
bottles, and the tin fireplace was
erflowing with ash that had set white
ıd hard in the rain. A postcard was
:ked to a bush pole. It featured a
ap of the state with the word
:CEDE! superimposed on it in faded
llow. A man's pants hung rotting on
chair. I'd been in some desolate
)ms in my time, but I never saw any-
ing so melancholy.

We finished our rounds at dusk. I was completely lost, and only my father's directions got us home.

You hear about the royal commission? I asked as I drove.

Someone said it was on.

All the coppers' names are in code.

The old man said nothing.

You're not curious?

It's a long time ago, he murmured. It's a shame to get this car dirty.

When we reached his place the dog came hurtling from the dark, sudden as memory.

The night was surprisingly cold. It took some time for the stove to warm the room to the point where it was comfortable, but when it was we sat in the light of two hurricane lamps and ate the stew the old man ladled from a cast-iron pot.

This is good.

Goat, he murmured.

You shoot them? I couldn't help but smile.

Now and then. What? he asked.

Nothing, I said. It's just like . . . I dunno . . . stepping back in time. Out here, I mean.

He shook his head, said nothing.

The smell of that wood, I said. What is it?

Desert pine.

Smells like cypress.

He nodded.

The Yanks have taken Baghdad.

I don't have an opinion on it.

Fair enough.

We ate in silence for a time. The dog sprawled before the stove swooning in the warmth.

I hear you're a lawyer now.

Yeah.

What kind?

Industrial relations.

On whose side?

The little bloke.

That's good, he said. That's good. Gotta look after the little bloke.

Well, that's the theory.

He pushed his plate away and sat back.

Your mother, he said. She's sick?

Yes.

He closed his eyes a moment and nodded, and it struck me that he was disappointed, hurt even.

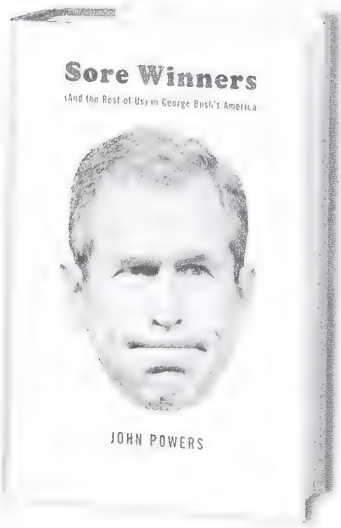
How sick?

She's dying.

He sighed and looked at his




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hands. He shook his head sadly. He looked at the dog.

Well. It . . . it hasn't been for nothing then.

What hasn't?

Sobering up. I couldn't have gone drunk.

I don't think she cares anymore, I said bitterly.

I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have gone drunk.

That's irrelevant.

I wouldn't have gone, he said with feeling. It's not irrelevant to me.

Jesus, you've been dry ten years anyway, it turns out.

Every day. Every day in readiness.

For what, seeing her?

Not seeing her. Facing her.

I sighed in exasperation.

Even another ten years would have been worth the wait.

It's not really about you, I said. I'm doing it for her.

I know that, he said hotly. But who's *she* doing it for?

I'm buggered if I know, I said in disgust, but even as I said it I realized what it was. This whole expedition. It was her way of bringing the two of us face to face.

Have you written to her?

Not since I've been straight.

Why not?

He shrugged. Shame, I s'pose. And I didn't want to get in her way.

She's still married to you!

So I believe.

I sighed. It's good that you're sober.

I'm proud of it, he murmured, with tears in his eyes. You won't understand. But it's all I have.

I sat there and hated myself, hated him too for making me the dour bastard I am, forged in shame and disappointment, childless, resigned, consoled only by order.

I'm sorry, he said, wiping his face. I wish I could undo it.

But you can't.

No.

So what the hell was it, Dad?

I lost my way, he said.

Yes, well we're across that already. You lost your way and we all got lost with you. But you never said. You'd never tell us. It's like this cloud, this dark thing, had found you, and you wouldn't say what it was. The job. There was something you did.

No, I said. I don't. What do you think? You think I'm sitting here waiting to be named in the inquiry?

I've wondered, I said without pleasure. I'm sorry.

I saw things, he said miserably. Well, I *had* seen things. Things I didn't really understand at the time. Don't even really understand now. But it was the surprise of it, knowing that I was on the outside. It was like wheels within wheels, and once I sniffed something crook I saw there was no one safe to tell. I was stuck, stranded.

Nobody at all?

For a while I thought I was going nuts, he murmured, his face turned from the murky lamplight. Didn't trust myself. Thought I was imagining it. But then there was this kid I remember. Small-time petty crim. Had his legs broken out on Thunder Beach. You remember that place?

I nodded. I remembered the beach vividly, and now I knew who he was talking about.

People said he got into a car with detectives, I said. That same afternoon.

That's it, said the old man. Two of the demons were down from the city.

What was it about?

Drugs, I s'pose. Never really understood it. Just that he'd fallen foul of 'em. And any question, any witness account, died on the vine, didn't matter who it came to. Felt like, whatever was going on I was the only bloke not in on it. And the city blokes were in on it; it was bigger than our little town, that's for sure. So who do you talk to? Even if you've got the balls, who can you trust? It ate me alive. Ulcers, everything. I should have quit, but I didn't even have the courage to do that. Would have saved us all a lot of pain. But it's all I ever wanted to do, you see, be a cop. And I hung on till there was nothing left of me, nothing left of any of us. Cowardice, it's a way of life. It's not natural, you learn it.

He got up and collected the plates and cutlery. He took a lamp from the table and hung it on the wall over the sink, where he tipped in water from the kettle. With his back to me and his head down in the rising steam he looked like a figure from another time, a woodcutter from a fairy tale, a stranger without a face, an idea much as a man. I wanted to get up a help, but I sat there behind him wh the stove clucked and hissed and t dog snored.

I believed him. I couldn't help m self. What he said gave some shape the misgivings of my youth, the sen that things were not all right arou me. And I felt pity for him, for t trap he'd found his way into, but no of it changed what we'd lived throug my mother and I. It would take a other lifetime to forgive him that. Ev then I knew it might not be fair blame him for her cancer, but none me was about to release him from From his very posture there at the sin the quiet, cautious way he handled t pieces that he washed, you could s that he sensed it.

So you're not curious about t royal commission? I said at last.

Those crooked bastards won be losing much sleep, he sai

Nothin' I can about it.

When he had wiped up and p the gear on the spartan shelves w went outside and stood at the ed of the veranda to see the hugeness the sky and the blizzard of stars up us. The cold night air had the c press tang of woodsmoke.

So how did you get off the booz I asked him.

Went to a meeting in Kal.

Just the one?

Only the one.

And what? I said with a dry litt laugh.

It was looking at them, he mu mured. The others. Drunks. The disgusted me.

What, you didn't feel sympathy?

Any more than you're feelin now, you mean? No. It was like look ing in the mirror and all their whi ing faces were mine. I'd had enoug self-pity.

So?

I was living behind the pub ther The Golden Barrow. Had a dong out the back, called meself a yar man but basically I was an alcoholi sweeping floors for drinks. Came o here, walked it with the dog. An hid. Had a humpy way back off th track. Think I was tryin' to work u

ıe nerve to kill meself. Lots of ıafts out here, no shortage of ıeans. Spent months plotting and lanning. Went mad, I s'pose. No-ɔdy left alive anymore to tell those ıles on me. And then I realized that d been six months without a drink. here was none to be had. Woke up ne morning, it was winter, and the ın was on this fallen tree, this dead ay tree, and there was steam rising ff the silver wood. And I felt . . . ew. Had this feeling that the world as inviting me in . . . like, luring me ɔward something. Life. I dunno.

I didn't expect it to be beautiful ere, I said for no reason other than ot knowing what to say. The cold urned my face, and whenever I ıoved the chill of my jeans branded ıy legs.

Just the sight of those bottle stacks utside the old blokes' shacks used to ıake me thirsty. But it fades.

You read a lot, I see.

Yes. It's an education. But my eyes e going.

We'll get you some glasses, I said.

What time d'you want to leave?

Oh, first thing.

Fair enough.

He gave me his bed that night ıd unrolled a battered swag on the ɔor in front of the stove where he ept with the dog, each of them ıoring quietly through cycles of ynchronization, while I lay awake ıttled by the smell of his body in ıe blankets about me and the rangeness of the hut with its ani-ıal sounds and sudden silences. I ondered how my mother would re-eive him, how she would react to ıe knowledge that he'd salvaged imself, and that she'd found him ɔo late. And when she was gone, hat then, what would I do about im? I lay there for hours on the nar-ɔw iron bunk like a frightened boy, ıd late in the night I covered my ıce with the pillow, which smelled f him, and cried at the thought of ıy mother.

When I woke the old man was sit-ng by the stove, shaved and dressed ı the lamplight. It was early morn-ıg. His swag was rolled and on his nee was a battered cashbox, which e held like a man entrusted. ■







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NOTES FOR "FOURSOMES":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

FOURSOME #1: 32A. O-D-Y-sse-Y-S (rev.); 15D. Dr.-AMA-ti(rev.)-c; 9D. obj*-ect*-ed(itor); 1A. to-s(tart)-spots.

FOURSOME #2: 7A. so-lo (homophone); 1D. Tom-(thum)b; 27D. (I)sits(o); 31A. cent (homophone).

FOURSOME #3: 30A. G.I.-Lt; 10A. (P.R.)oust; 8D. (p)luck; 26D. B-One.

FOURSOME #4: 29A. inhered (hidden); 11A. But-H-tab (rev.); 2D. outroot*; 20D. tin(nil)y.

FOURSOME #5: 13D. cohere*; 12A. g-rap-pa; 16D. gull-et; 28A. g(asping)-lu(l)ng.

FOURSOME #6: 25A. a-be-cedar-l-ans.; 14A. breaststroke*; 7D. short-comings(homophone); 3D. strait(homophone)-jack-ET.

FOURSOME #7: 24A. amen-d.; 6D. state (two mngs.); 23D. N-e.g.-ro(rev.); 15A. dogi*-E.

FOURSOME #8: 18A. eth*-1-c; 24D. Aries*; 22A. Milan (hidden in rev.); 4D. phase (homophone).

FOURSOME #9: 17D. unaddle*-d.; 5D. Taps-ters*; 19A. r(out-in)es.; 21A. Ma(r)jor-(sk)ie(rs).

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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## HE REPUBLICAN EMOCRAT?

***en some opponents credit Bush th "democratic idealism." They e mistaken***

Even as Democrats have in near unanimity assailed the domestic policies of President Bush, me moderates on the left confess niration for his "democratic ide- sm"—for his renunciation, or so e story goes, of a century of Amer- n foreign policy that has sought bility at the expense of demo- tic values. Bush, who during the 00 campaign espoused a foreign licy that could only be called udo-isolationist, is supposed to ve experienced a change of heart September 11, after which he w closer to the idealists in his ministration, chief among them puty Secretary of Defense Paul lfowitz, who had argued that U.S.- ked democratization was the only ans with which to combat rising ab radicalism. In his most celebrat- foreign-policy speech to date, Bush t fall declared that "sixty years of estern nations excusing and accom- dating the lack of freedom in the ddle East did nothing to make us e," and announced that democrati- ion would hereafter be the center American foreign policy. This was leed a remarkable declaration from Republican president, considering at recent presidents from that party, m Nixon to Reagan to George H.W. Bush, had rarely strayed from the dictator-friendly realism most famously expressed by Reagan official Jeane Kirkpatrick, who in an influential 1979 article had exhorted Washington to befriend stable "authoritarian" regimes in the effort to combat "totalitarian" states such as the Soviet Union.

In Bush's conversion narrative, many moderate Democrats see an



endorsement of their own humanitarian hawkishness—in particular, of the interventionist ideas that had been used to justify the Clinton Administration's 1999 military campaign in Kosovo, which was widely criticized by the right at the time and was, in fact, precisely the sort of exercise in "nation building" that candidate Bush spent so much energy deriding. Some hopeful moderates have gone so far as to compare the new Bush to Woodrow Wilson, who dreamed that democratic transformation of the world might become the cornerstone of American foreign policy. And, in fact, such idealism today might have a strategic rationale. Democracies rarely go to war against other democracies, whereas political repression fuels the kind of extremism that gave rise to Al Qaeda: a recent study by Princeton economist Alan Krueger found that a lack of political rights, far more than poverty, predicts which countries are most likely to produce terrorists.

Yet in the regions of the world where democracy is most tenuous—and democratization most vital—the President has consistently failed to support pro-democracy movements, even to the modest extent his predecessor did. In the process, Bush's foreign policy has, predictably, exacerbated anti-Americanism and Islamism in these strategically vital regions, abetting the recruiting efforts of terrorist groups. Indeed, Bush's lofty rhetoric seems to be little more than a smokescreen for the expansion and entrenchment of American power overseas—a hardly Wilsonian goal.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the former Soviet states of Central Asia have been perhaps the world's most important proving grounds for democratization. Yet in Central Asia the White House has taken decisive steps backward from the pro-democracy policies of President Clinton, most notably in Uzbekistan. Whereas Clinton downgraded relations with that nation after the Uzbek leader, Islam Karimov, jailed hundreds of opposition politicians, the Bush Administration since September 11 has in-

trations by Christopher Serra

creasingly supported Karimov, in the hopes both of establishing U.S. military bases in Uzbekistan and of securing the shipment of Afghan heroin through Central Asia. In the past three years, the United States has given Uzbekistan at least $300 million in aid, up from virtually none under Clinton. Dissidents suspect that the money has been funneled into the private accounts of Karimov, who meanwhile has, in the past three years, imprisoned some 6,000 more dissidents, some of whom have actually been boiled to death. (The government has referred to the deaths as "accidents with kettles.") Earlier this year, the U.S. ambassador to Uzbekistan, Jon Robert Purnell, spent a meeting with Uzbek human-rights advocates warning them not to ask him "political questions" about the country, according to the rights advocates, whose reports were broadcast by the BBC. This summer the Bush Administration did cut assistance to Uzbekistan, in protest of its human-rights record. But the cuts were largely symbolic—only a fraction of overall U.S. aid to the country—and at the same time the State Department affirmed America's close partnership with Uzbekistan in the war on terror. Ironically, Karimov's respression has allowed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, one of the most violent of these groups, to up its recruiting, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG); and a series of suicide bombings rattled the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, this spring.

In South Asia the White House has charted a similar course. Pakistan's ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, seized power from a civilian government in 1999. But the Bush Administration, believing Musharraf to be a vital cog in the war on terror, [illegible] proposed $3 billion in aid for Pakistan; the State Department also recognized Pakistan as a "major non-NATO ally," a status typically reserved for America's closest friends. No longer under foreign pressure to return his nation to civilian rule, Musharraf has felt free to jail or exile prominent dissidents and to push through a Stalinist "referendum" to extend his own term of power for five years. Yet Musharraf has made little progress in closing radical [illegible] helped the most extreme, anti-American [illegible] Islamic parties now control Pakistan's Northwest [illegible] time they have ever gained dominance over an entire region. Meanwhile, in Nepal, Bush has offered the regime new military aid despite its worsening human-rights record. As the ICG recently reported, the result has been "broad public perception in Nepal that the United States is backing an unelected and undemocratic government at all costs."

If pressured by the West, China, the world's largest authoritarian state, could soon become another crucial battleground in the fight for world democracy; yet here, too, the White House has chosen instead to abet tyranny. In the western Chinese province of Xinjiang, a minority ethnic group, the Uighurs, have responded to decades of government repression with a mostly nonviolent campaign for autonomy, and the Clinton Administration condemned Beijing for its treatment of the Uighurs. After the September 11 attacks, Beijing embarked upon a massive propaganda campaign to tie Uighur dissidents to Al Qaeda. Although most experts on the Uighurs do not believe such a link exists, the White House endorsed Beijing's claims; on a visit to Beijing in 2002, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage announced that the United States would be placing a Uighur separatist group, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which few counterterror experts had ever heard of, on the State Department's list of the world's most dangerous terror organizations. Now, as Beijing continues to unleash its wrath on the ethnic minority, the regime at every turn links the crackdown to the U.S. war on terror. And, China specialists say, Beijing's Xinjiang crackdown has prompted many Uighurs, historically among the most moderate, pro-U.S. Muslims in the world, [illegible] Islamist groups.

The Middle East is, of course, [illegible] region Bush supporters have in mind when they tout his commitment to democracy. Certainly the new regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq are, for the time being at least, more democratic than their predecessors. But the question of whether our costly wars in either country was actually fought for democracy—rather than for simpler and more immediate goals, such as disrupting Al Qaeda or stopping the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—remains murky, not least in the public statements of the administration itself. And in all other respects Bush's commitment to democracy in the Middle East—or, for that matter, in Africa, another crucial region for democratization—has been laughable.

In June, for example, he unveiled his Greater Middle East Initiative with the stated goal of promoting democratic reform in the Middle East and Africa. But under pressure from dictator friends such as Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, Bush had gutted the initiative—which originally provided for comprehensive efforts to promote free elections and democratic institutions—to the point where it consisted of only a few, minor proposals advancing literacy, microfinance, and the like. Yet Bush has undermined even these weak initiatives through his continuing support for Arab and African autocrats. The prime example, of course, is the Saudi government; most recently, two National Security Council officials reportedly bullied the Council on Foreign Relations into toning down a report critical of the Saudis. The White House also has developed closer relations with Algeria, under whose authoritarian regime thousands of civilians have vanished at the hands of the army and other state security forces. The Bush Administration has allowed the U.S. military to train and equip Algerian officers and also has allowed the Algerian army to participate in NATO exercises—a symbolic U.S. acceptance of the military regime.

Three authoritarian regimes in western Africa—Equatorial Guinea,

abon, and Angola, all of them large
l producers—also have benefited
om the Bush Administration. In
995 the Clinton Administration
ıd closed the U.S. embassy in Equa-
rial Guinea as a protest of that na-
on's human-rights abuses, and had
stanced the United States from
abon and Angola by not embracing
ıeir leaders at the White House.
ut shortly after Bush's election, as
ıe *Los Angeles Times* revealed in
002, several U.S. oil companies be-
ın pressuring the White House to
establish ties to Equatorial Guinea.
ı late 2001 the Bush Administra-
on reopened the U.S. embassy
ıere, even though the country's
ıman-rights abuses had not abated,
ıd in September 2002, Equatorial
uinea's president, who has ruled for
venty-five years and has typically
on his "elections" with nearly 100
ercent of the vote, was granted a
sit to Washington. Gabon's and
ngola's corrupt and autocratic lead-
s, who have ruled their nations for
ıirty-seven years and twenty-five
ars, respectively, have been grant-
l similarly warm welcomes at the
/hite House; to Gabon, Bush has
/en offered military aid.

In speeches, Bush often pretends to channel Wilson. In England last November, Bush remarked: The last president to stay at Buck-ıgham Palace was an idealist, ithout question. At a dinner host-l by King George V in 1918, /oodrow Wilson made a pledge.... e vowed that right and justice ould become the predominant and ɔntrolling force in the world.... ow our generation has need of ıese qualities." Bush called for a global expansion of democracy, ıd the hope and progress it brings, the alternative to instability and ıatred and terror." Yet Bush's ac-ons have made America into just ıe sort of nation that Wilson re-iled. In a famous 1920 speech, /ilson denounced "imperialism, hich seeks to dominate by force ıd unjust power"; he was referring ɔt only to British-style empires of conquest but to powers, like pre–World War I Germany, that bent smaller nations to their will through threats and alliances. He dreamed that the world's large democracies, in order to promote self-determination for smaller nations, would lend their weight to alliances and multilateral institutions, such as the League of Nations, that could draft and enforce international laws restraining large states. Bush, of course, has attacked the alliances and multilateral institutions that are the heirs to Wilson's vision—the U.N., the International Criminal Court, and others—in favor of an American unilateralism unchecked by international power. In his campaign to expand U.S. military power, he has abandoned democrats all over the world.

In 1918, Mark Sullivan, author of a leading history of early twentieth-century America, observed Wilson as he traveled across Europe. Sullivan wrote that "everywhere he went, [Wilson] was the idol of the masses. . . . Never since Peter the Hermit had Europe so blindly, so eagerly followed one leader." On the overseas trips of our would-be Wilsonian—perhaps the most unpopular president abroad in modern history—the masses invariably turn out too; not in praise but in protest.

—*Joshua Kurlantzick*

## DEFINING DEVIANCY DOWN

***The administration's case for legalizing war crimes***

In the year leading up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, George W. Bush spoke frequently of "regimes that do not comply with international law." He was against them. He argued that the United States, a beacon of democracy, should help the world show those regimes the way to justice. Indeed, for many years the United States had been at the forefront of the effort to create organizations that would bind nations together under the rule of law, from the Nuremberg tribunals to the World Trade Organization. And yet for some reason, in the spring of 2002, Bush withdrew the United States from the Rome Treaty, which four years earlier had established a permanent system, the International Criminal Court, for bringing the likes of Saddam Hussein to international justice.

Marc Grossman, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, said at the time that the treaty would put "U.S. officials, our men and women in uniform, at risk of politicized prosecutions"; that "states, not international institutions, are primarily responsible for ensuring justice in the international system"; and that the ICC would be an "unchecked power." International bodies were fine for trade disputes, but for matters of justice the only real solution would be to bring democracy to the world one nation at a time. "Nations with accountable, democratic governments," he said, "do not abuse their own people or wage wars of conquest and terror."

The administration's arguments, however, fall apart under closer inspection. For example, the Rome Treaty had recognized what are called status-of-forces agreements, which protect U.S. troops deployed in friendly countries from international prosecution. The State Department itself acknowledged last year that "there is little debate about covering serving U.S. military personnel" but said the immunity should apply to "all American citizens"—including private contractors and even civilian administration officials. As for democracy being a better solution, that was fine as far as it went, but, as many critics of the withdrawal pointed out at the time, the primary purpose of the ICC was to try crimes against humanity and war crimes where national courts had failed. It is hard to imagine, for example, that the government of Sudan will put itself on trial for killing tens of thousands of its own people. And the Iraqi Special Tribunal created to try Saddam Hussein has already demonstrated some of the weaknesses of national war crimes courts.

The Bush Administration seemed especially concerned about matters of immunity. Indeed, upon withdrawing from the treaty it began a surprisingly successful campaign to get the nations of the world to sign bilateral immunity agreements guaranteeing that suspected U.S. war criminals on their soil would not be turned over to the ICC. The State Department says that ninety-two countries have signed the so-called Article 98 agreements, though it has agreed not to reveal the identities of at least twenty of them. (Another forty-four countries have refused to sign such a treaty, and in some cases the administration has withheld military aid in order to change their minds.) Some of the agreements are reciprocal. Accused war criminals from Georgia, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Uganda, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Israel, Mauritania, and Nicaragua need not fear extradition by the ICC from U.S. territory.

Given the inadequacy of the administration's justifications, one must at least examine the possibility that it is in fact responding to concerns that are far closer to hand. In this regard, it may be helpful to consider the series of legal memos, written in 2002 and 2003 and released to the media this spring, that attempt to reshape the U.S. relationship to international law, supposedly in response to the demands of the war on terror. Those memos tell the story of an administration laboring not to protect the American people from war crimes but to redefine those crimes out of existence and, in the process, to protect itself from prosecution.



When Major General Antonio Taguba reported last March that the prisoner abuses in Iraq were "systemic and illegal," he may have been only half right. Even before its withdrawal from the Rome Treaty, the Bush Administration had begun taking steps to ensure not only that there would be no international oversight of its war crimes but that their torture and other violations of the Geneva Conventions would no longer be contrary even to U.S. law.

In a January 9, 2002, draft memo, two Justice Department attorneys argued that the Taliban and Al Qaeda were not "enemy combatants" and therefore were not protected by the Geneva Conventions. Although it was not known publicly at the time, the memo caused a furor within the executive branch. Within two days, the State Department's legal adviser, William H. Taft IV, had drafted a response finding the memo "legally flawed and procedurally impossible" as well as "contrary to the official position of the United States, the United Nations and all other states that have considered the issue."

The State Department was not the only concerned party. A "former military official familiar with the dispute" told the *Washington Post* that "it was clearly the position of the senior leaders of the military that the Geneva Conventions should apply," most likely for the same reason the United States had signed on to those conventions in the first place: to help prevent captured U.S. troops from being tortured. Nonetheless, the White House continued to act as if the Geneva Conventions did not apply. It argued publicly that the world was a different place after the September 11 attacks, and that defending the American people would require tough measures. As White House counsel Alberto Gonzales wrote in a January 25 memo, "This new paradigm renders obsolete Geneva's strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners and renders quaint some of its provisions. . . ."

It was Attorney General John Ashcroft, however, who provided a other, more practical justification f putting enlisted men in harm's way voiding the treaty designed to prote them. Doing so, he wrote in a Febr ary 1 memo, would help protect mi tary officers and "law enforcement c ficials" from prosecution under Gene Convention rules.

Of course, making an exception the Taliban or Al Qaeda would n help the administration in the u coming invasion of Iraq, and so the a ministration's legal preparations co tinued. In August 2002—the sam month that the first of the Article 9 agreements were signed—the Justic Department went for broke and, in y another memo, declared the admini tration exempt from even U.S. law against torture. "Even if an interrog tion method arguably were to viola Section 2340A"—the applicable fe eral anti-torture statute—"the statut would be unconstitutional if it impe missibly encroached on the President constitutional power to conduct a mi itary campaign." That is, if any law pr vents the President from doing what h deems to be his constitutional dut that law would itself be unconstitu tional. That same memo not onl claimed unprecedented powers for th President but also redefined torture excluding from the word much of wha had been considered unacceptabl about the act; the Justice Departmen the memo said, considers torture onl to be physical pain "equivalent in in tensity to the pain accompanying ser ous physical injury, such as organ fail ure, impairment of bodily function, c even death."

Although the administration lawyers still claimed to be workin within the framework of internation al treaties, they had stripped both American and international law of al meaning. The findings were ludicrou on their face, and when the memo be came public this year, administration officials disavowed it. Nonetheless, no one of the government's declassifie or leaked documents from the twent months between the drafting of the memo and its disclosure argue agains it. On the contrary, an April 2003 re

ort, prepared for Donald Rumsfeld by efense Department staff, reiterates e argument that torture is a legal in- rrogation tactic: "In order to respect e President's inherent constitution- authority to manage a military cam- ign, 18 U.S.C. 2340A (the prohibi- on against torture) as well as any her potentially applicable statute ust be construed as inapplicable to in- rrogations undertaken pursuant to s Commander-in-Chief authority." In perhaps a final outlaw wink, the efense Department memo claimed at the President's authority to order rture cannot be checked even by merican lawmakers. "Congress may more regulate the President's abil- to detain and interrogate enemy mbatants than it may regulate his ility to direct troop movements on e battlefield."

At the same time, then, that the administration was planning to go to war, it was working not ly to change the way war crimes uld be prosecuted but also to narrow e legal definitions of those crimes, sentially legalizing torture and other use and freeing administration offi- als themselves, in their own minds yway, from the interfering do-gooders the international community and e United States Congress.

Oddly, however, these preparations ay in fact leave high-level Bush Ad- inistration officials *more* vulnerable international prosecution for war imes. Even if investigations like ose by the International Committee the Red Cross, Human Rights atch, and Major General Taguba d not suggest that abuse at Abu hraib was systemic, even if there ere no other proof of a planned pol- y, the paper trail aimed at redefining d legalizing torture suggests that isoner treatment was the result of ecific administration policies, not a w rogue soldiers, thus rendering the ue of interest to The Hague.

Thanks to their foresight, though, sh Administration officials are free wander the globe—or at least ninety- o countries—with impunity.

—*Elisabeth Eaves*

# RISK MANAGEMENT

***The FDA's deference to drug companies is bad for America's health***

As medication becomes a way of life for more and more Americans, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has been remodeled to fit the times. Of the 296 drugs the FDA has approved in the last decade, most have been lifestyle drugs, or copycats of already existing medicines, or both. There have been multiple obesity treatments, allergy medicines, hair-loss cures, impotence pills, and drugs for the newest "disease," irritable bowel syndrome. Despite offering consumers few additional health benefits, these drugs have proven a boon for those the FDA has identified in internal documents, since the late 1990s, as its "customers": the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture and sell the drugs. The pharmaceutical industry has done much to put itself so securely in the government's good graces. Since the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 1994, drug companies have spent in excess of $500 million on lobbying and political contributions, and rank among the top fifteen industries in overall giving to members of Congress.

Congress has repaid this largesse by passing several "FDA reform" bills that have made the agency more responsive to the wishes of drug companies. In addition to giving faster and more frequent drug approvals, the FDA has done little to prevent companies from promoting "off-label" uses of drugs approved only for a specific symptom or illness. It also has allowed companies to claim "proprietary trade information" to keep negative studies about their pharmaceuticals secret: the pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline, for instance, was not required to publish tests that revealed its antidepressant Paxil—which earned the company $3 billion in revenue in 2002—to be little different than a placebo when used by young patients. Even more shocking is the extent to which the FDA has routinely downplayed and suppressed safety concerns expressed by its own experts and drug reviewers. Of the thirteen drugs withdrawn from the market due to health risks since 1997, at least seven are now known to have been approved over the objections of FDA safety reviewers, who either had warned of serious potential dangers or had refused to sign official approval letters. Between just 1996 and 1998, at least twenty-seven drugs were made available to the public over the objections of FDA scientists.

In its mission statement, the FDA has pledged to protect "the public health" and to ensure that the American people "get the accurate, science-based information they need." But as politicians have become beholden to drugmakers' money, the FDA increasingly has promoted sales over science, serving as a de facto subsidiary of the very industry it is supposed to oversee.

This conflict of interest has resulted in a string of cases in which the FDA has knowingly failed to safeguard the public's health. In 1996 the FDA approved the diet drug Redux—which later had to be withdrawn, along with another weight-loss medication involved in the deadly fen-phen scandal—after its lead reviewer warned of "severe life-threatening risk." The diet drug Meridia, which was known to raise blood pressure and is now suspected as a factor in forty-nine deaths, was allowed to reach consumers despite the protests of an FDA advisory committee. Another pharmaceutical approved over the concerns of the agency's doctors was Lotronex, a pill for irritable bowel syndrome. Although later withdrawn amid allegations that the drug caused numerous hospitalizations and deaths, Lotronex was returned to the marketplace after a successful patient "advocacy" and "education" campaign, which was funded in part by its manufacturer. In March 2003 the FDA approved Arava, a new drug for arthritis, despite the fact that FDA experts had linked it to liver toxicity. Because new guidelines at the FDA prohibit reviewers from formally stating their



longtime specialist in antidepressants and pediatrics, Dr. Andrew Mosholder [illegible] other antidepressants offered children and teens few health benefits and caused [illegible] the FDA attempted to suppress his findings. Weeks before a February public meeting at which Mosholder was to present his report, he was advised by superiors at the FDA to adopt "alternative language" and to issue only "an executive summary. No recommendations." His direct supervisor wrote in a memo, "Would be nice touch to acknowledge the limitations of your analysis." Even as Mosholder was conducting his scientific study, the FDA bowed to pressure from Paxil's maker and approved the drug for a large secondary market, women with premenstrual syndrome.

The FDA also has ignored its safety experts' warnings on over-the-counter medicines. If the FDA had listened to its doctors, the dietary supplement ephedra would have been withdrawn in 1995—almost a decade before the 2003 death of a Baltimore Orioles pitcher made the issue's dangers into headline news. In 2000, when FDA epidemiologists issued a formal recommendation to remove the chemical PPA from all over-the-counter cold medicines and diet pills because it had been linked to strokes, the drugs' manufacturers contained the scientific. Officials at the FDA backed the drugmakers, instructing their doctors to give only the facts about PPA, not their own recommendation.

Indeed, in order to be more industry friendly, the FDA has changed its entire philosophy on how a drug's safety is evaluated. Whereas previously the [illegible] lement standard of "risk management," [illegible] are in some measure unsafe and leaves [illegible] monitor a drug's effects with frequent [illegible] possibility in this age of managed health [illegible] the FDA has undercut the Office of Drug Safety (ODS), the division whose scientific research is supposed to guide the approval and labeling of all drugs. According to one FDA employee, the deputy commissioner in the agency's drug-review center, Dr. Steven Galson, announced at a September 2003 closed meeting that ODS had to do more to "add value" to the agency's work. This past March scientists at the FDA were told that the agency's Office of New Drugs (OND), which is ultimately responsible for drug approval, would no longer be requiring their final safety recommendations in writing.

Soon after hearing of this development, Charles Grassley, a Republican senator from Iowa, launched an inquiry into the structural and procedural failings at the FDA. "The Office of Drug Safety may be nothing more than an unwanted stepchild of the Office of New Drugs," Grassley said in a recent interview. In June he appealed to the General Accounting Office to begin a formal review of the FDA's drug-approval process, writing in his request "It appears that OND influences ODS often and dramatically, [and] that OND is frequently the last word on analyses, reviews and consults done by ODS employees.... It seems that ODS, which is considered the 'watchdog' for the public at large, may be more of a 'lapdog' with little influence and independence."

Grassley first turned his attention to practices at the FDA in his capacity as the author of the 1989 Federal Whistleblower Protection Act. Days before the public meetings at which Dr. Mosholder had initially been scheduled to issue his findings on antidepressants, an insider at the FDA leaked to the press word of Mosholder's report and its suppression. The FDA responded by undertaking a criminal investigation through its internal affairs division to learn the identity of this informant. For four months Grassley was unable to halt what he called the FDA's "witch hunt." Grassley said, "I think the FDA has used the leak investigation to send a message to all employees to keep their mouths shut. The level of fear of retaliation that appears to be rampant among FDA employees is striking."

The drug industry's political influence has left Grassley virtually alone in this fight. Grassley's fellow Republicans in the House have repeatedly delayed a preliminary hearing on FDA practices; Democrats have remained wholly silent. Although a change in the White House come November might do some good—the Bush Administration has already proven that its faith in big business trumps the dictates of science—much of the oversight of the FDA occurs in Congress, where Republicans are more likely to retain control. The most hopeful sign has come from New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who, in June, filed a civil suit against GlaxoSmithKline for its withholding of negative studies on Paxil. Finally someone in government is putting consumer safety ahead of pharmaceutical profits—unfortunately, it is not the Food and Drug Administration.

—*Alicia Mundy*

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# NEW BOOKS

## By John Leonard

Those of you who carry a torch for Marlowe, Bacon, and/or the Earl of Oxford—who refuse to believe that if Shakespeare didn't write his plays, somebody else with the same name must have—need not trouble your thick heads with Stephen Greenblatt's delightful WILL IN THE WORLD: HOW SHAKESPEARE BECAME SHAKESPEARE (Norton, $26.95). The rest of us, however, can never get enough of the man Greenblatt knows more about than Ben Jonson or the Dark Lady did. Heretofore deep inside his Elizabethan subject, like a scholarly mole in such tomes as *Hamlet in Purgatory* and *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt has suddenly come up for light and air, and decided to tell all. The Harvard professor of humanities dons doublet, hose, ruff, and hose and turns himself into a Johnny Appleseed of iambs.



Will in his world was a brilliant social climber, after which he hid the ladder—word-drunk, bat-eared, acrobatic, and evasive; class-conscious, sexually ambiguous, covertly agnostic, and an Oedipal revolt; a poacher, a Proteus, a satirist, a courtier, a stand-up comic, a magic flute, a sensory sponge and memory bank of "reckless passion" and "subversive ideas." Greenblatt follows him from the provincial north into world literature, introducing us along the way to his heavy-drinking, glove-making, wool-smuggling, money-lending, and shamefully indebted father, who couldn't afford to send his son to a university. And to the closeted Roman Catholic teachers who taught the boy to read Latin. And to the stagecraft magic of Terence and Plautus, morality plays and Corpus Christi pageants, Maypoles and Leaping Morris Dancers. And to London late in the sixteenth century, a great engine of upward mobility, full of theaters and scaffolds, state torture and Jesuit conspiracies, virgin queens and severed heads, religious terror and bubonic plague.

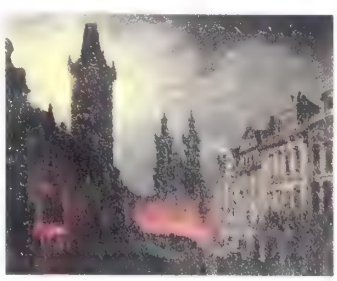
We are briefed not only on Falstaff, Shylock, Juliet, Othello, Prospero, Lady Macbeth, and King Lear but also on the personalities and events that inspired them, and the books Will stole from to swot up on local color. It was, of course, a transformative art, and transgressive too—a source "both of settled calm and of deep disturbance," says Greenblatt, who proves it with quotations plucked like tropical breadfruit. Will even played the Ghost in his own *Hamlet*. And, after averaging "two stupendous plays a year" for almost two decades, he finally renounced the stage and retired early on his portfolio of real-estate investments in the Stratford suburbs, where a wife was waiting who might never have read a word he wrote. Imagine that—he just walked away, like Sandy Koufax and Cincinnatus.

Perhaps Kafka should have walked as well—quit Prague and quit scribbling, taken sleeping pills and antidepressants, gone into therapy or the rabbinate. Anyone so miserable so often should wonder whether blaming his father, his room, his job, his diet, his telephone, and his girlfriends—who must not have been too swift, given all the whining they put up with about his *Eigentümlichkeit*—hasn't become an alibi instead of an explanation. I ducked once into the doll's house where he used to write, near Prague Castle, and it seemed clear that he was all about failure—that everything had been declared incomprehensible, nothing would ever be known, and there could never be a happy ending. "Balzac carried a cane," he said, "on which was carved the legend: I smash every obstacle; my legend reads: Every obstacle smashes me."

*Hamlet and Horatio in the Churchyard*, by Eugene Delacroix © Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York City; engraving of an English troupe doing a Morris Dance © Bettmann/CORBIS

Yet Nicholas Murray tells us in his rich new biography, KAFKA (Yale, $30), that he was six feet tall, with a devoted sister, a loyal publisher, lots of friends to go to movies with, a well-paying job with regular raises and promotions, and gray eyes to die for. He was, moreover, a swimmer, a boater, a sunbather in the nude, and a teetotaling vegetarian who "Fletcherized" his food morsels (programmed intensive chewing). Perhaps, before the onset of TB, he enjoyed himself too much in sanatoriums, but why not? There was always another young woman to flirt with, in a place that was better than a brothel or even the Vienna Woods (though how he expected to reconcile himself to the idea of marriage while he kept on reading Kierkegaard and Strindberg is a puzzlement). "Permit me," he said, "to pull such stories over me as a sick man draws sheets and blankets over himself." You will remember that Henry David Thoreau was in and out of a pencil factory. The factory of which Franz Kafka was part owner made asbestos. This is not an allegory. Is it?

In Murray's biography there is much of Felice, to whom Franz mailed a quarter of a million wasted words so full of his "self-doubt and self-loathing" that we are numbed. Dora and Milena seem to have been healthier relationships. But the imaginary Joseph K. rides roughshod over all of them, on his way to a butcher's knife. (Kafka's father, Hermann, was a butcher's son.) "I think," confided Franz, "we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us." If he ran toward his tuberculosis as the ultimate excuse for never finishing anything, his unfinished works became our excuse for prizing fragments, settling for ellipses. And no matter how much weirdness the scholars find to tattle to us, when we settle down to his sinister dreamscapes, where guilt is nameless, justice faceless, space liquid, time centrifugal, God absent, law a lie, and sexuality cannibalistic, all the imaginary spiders and beetles and harrows and hungers are reading us, rather than the other way around.



I would also just as soon not have known quite as much about the Nobel Prize–winning Chilean poet as Adam Feinstein tells us in his scrupulous and exacting PABLO NERUDA: A PASSION FOR LIFE (Bloomsbury, $32.50), especially the way he treated the women in his life, after he did or didn't marry them. He was a lot more loyal to Josef Stalin. But the great writers knock you down and step on your facetiousness. Only twenty-seven years ago I reviewed Neruda's *Memoirs*. Now I find out what he omitted or sometimes even lied about. None of it will change minds; his old friend and fellow poet the martyred Federico García Lorca still gets the last best words on the Walt Whitman of the Latin Americas: "closer to death than to philosophy, closer to pain than to intelligence, closer to blood than to ink."

But before we get to any summing up, there are diplomatic postings to consider, from Rangoon to Colombo to Buenos Aires to Barcelona to Mexico City; writers, artists, and politicians to be embraced, from such Latin Americans as Miguel Angel Asturias, Salvador Allende, Jorge Amado, Fidel Castro, Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Gabriela Mistral, Octavio Paz, Diego Rivera, and César Vallejo to such world citizens as Louis Aragon, Luis Buñuel, Ilya Ehrenburg, Paul Eluard, Allen Ginsberg, André Malraux, Arthur Miller, Jawaharlal Nehru, Pablo Picasso, Paul Robeson, Leonard Woolf, and Yevgeny Yevtushenko; wars to lose, and countries, too, such as Spain in the 1930s to Franco and his fascists and Chile in the 1970s to Pinochet and Kissinger; books to read by Hugo, Cervantes, Gorky, Proust, and Dostoevsky; books to write, dozens of them, including a 1926 novella and a 1969 film script, based on Herman Melville's slave-rebellion novel *Benito Cereno*; women to love, only one of whom died in an insane asylum; World Peace Congresses to attend, for limbering up so he could sell out Boris Pasternak; bloody lambs, wild swans, opium pipes, flamingos, tangos, and harpoons; love, solitude, rain, bells; wind, sea, sh[i]ducks; an Armenian tapir, a M[o] Grosso mollusk, a pet mongoose[a] Mongolian whiskey made out of [fe]mented camel's milk. And the sa[ga] Neruda who saved the lives of thousa[nds] of Spanish Republic refugees co[uld] never manage to learn to drive a c[ar].

What he said of Rubén Darío [was] equally true of himself: "A huge e[le]phant, a music-maker who shatter[ed] all the glass windows in the Spani[sh] language of his time to let in the air [of] the world." Pablo was the peopl['s] poet, exuberant till it killed him, [a] whom, as for his hero Pushkin, ver[se] making was the normal respiration [of] intelligence, a gill he breathe[d] through, containing, once you scrap[e] the slogans off, such Whitmanesq[ue] multitudes and yawps as we only see[m] to find these days south of our bo[r]ders, where dreamboats sail on riv[ers] unto revolutions, blood turns into bu[t]terflies, poets convert the language [of] the brutal conquistadores—the wo[rds] that "fell like pebbles out of the bo[ots] of the barbarians, out of their bear[d]s, their helmets, their horseshoes," [as] Pablo wrote in his memoirs—in[to] masks, totems, and valentines, a[nd] men with kaleidoscope eyes write h[is]tories in fire and ice. Such splend[or] excess almost shames us. In *Cland[es]tine in Chile*, García Márquez's odd l[it]tle book about the filmmaker Migu[el] Littín, we are told that Neruda spe[nt] his Nobel Prize money removing [a] castle and stable from Normandy [to] his own back yard, in Isla Negra, f[or] the churchlike vaults, the staine[d] glass windows, and a pond full of lot[us] flowers. Some Communist!

Personally, I choose to rememb[er] him as forever young as he was in Ju[ne] 1927, stopping at age twenty-three [in] Buenos Aires on his way to Rangoo[n] for a two-hour chat with Jorge Lu[is] Borges. Borges would recall their co[n]versation on these lines: "He said [to] me: 'It simply isn't possible to write [in] Spanish.' I replied: 'You're right. That [is] why no one has ever written anythi[ng] in that language.' Then he suggested: 'Why not write in English or French?' 'Fine, but how can we be so sure th[at] we deserve to write in those languages?' In the end, we decided that we woul[d] have to resign ourselves to writing i[n] Spanish, after all."

*Nocturnal scene in the Old Square in Prague*, by Jacob Vetre[no]
© The Art Archive/Historical Museum Prague/Dagli Orti (A[rt]

# A FORM OF NCOMPREHENSION

## The curious phenomenon of Borges

By Guy Davenport

iscussed in this essay:

*orges: A Life*, by Edwin Williamson. Viking, 2004. 592 pages. $34.95.



Considering that most reviews are written in extensive ignorance of an author's other works as well as even emptier ignorance, both atural and acquired, of any historical or literary context whatsoever, I el obliged to say that I have read Argentine literature, all three books of it: Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo: o, Civilización y barbarie*, Ricardo Güiraldes's *Don Segundo Sombra*, and their bogus folk-epic *Martín Fierro*. For good measure, I can throw in Sarmiento's *Viajes por Europa, Africa y América* and W. H. Hudson's *Far Away and Long Ago*. To these works the whole world decided in the 1960s to add the *opera omnia* of Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), whose biography Edwin Williamson has written in 592 crowded pages, the eleventh life of Borges to be published (twelfth, if you count Fernando Savater's recent *Jorge Luis Borges*, from Omega's "Literary Lives" series in Barcelona).

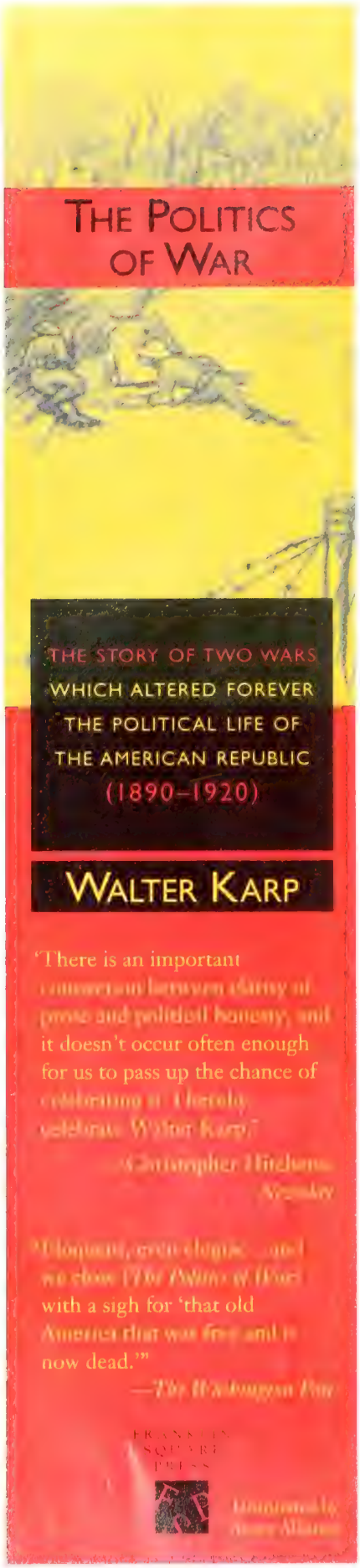
One of Borges's earliest stories, "Pierre Menard, Author of *Don Quixote*," was published in Victoria Ocampo's magazine *Sur* (May 1939). Twenty-three years later, we got to see it in English in the Grove Press *Ficciones* and the New Directions *Labyrinths*, rival selections neck and neck in their ardor to bring us Borges. The French had already discovered him; Italo Calvino had declared him a genius; André Maurois had laid on the French Academy's blessing. Only England remained in the dark. We normally get European culture fifty years after its creation: a quarter century to cross the Atlantic, a quarter century to become a fad. But culture from Argentina? Borges had to bounce off France for us to hear of him. Students began to carry around unread paperbacks of Borges along with their unread Hermann Hesse.

"Pierre Menard" comes from the ambience of Paul Valéry and Mallarmé, of exquisite sensibilities tuned to rarer and rarer subtleties. (All of Borges is "out of phase," more kin to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century France than to English or American writing.) Menard's fictional bibliography would have, if real, lain around Remy de Gourmont's rooms, or Stuart Merrill's, glanced at by Ezra Pound. His feat is curiously misreported by critics. What Menard did was so acclimatize himself with Cervantes's historical moment that, after many tries, he could write one page (not all) of *Don Quixote* word-for-word identically with Cervantes's. This gives Borges the leverage to observe that Menard's page was "much richer," which pleased Hugh Kenner immensely, who at the time was fascinated by the palpable difference of a can of Campbell's soup signed and exhibited by Andy Warhol as art and an identical can for sale at the grocery. Neither Kenner, Warhol, nor Borges was aware that Ludwig Wittgenstein had spent the previous two decades agonizing over things that look alike but are wholly different.

The scholar who can see unapparent similarities and affinities in disparate

*uy Davenport, previously the New Books olumnist for* Harper's Magazine, *is the author, ost recently, of* The Death of Picasso: New . Selected Writing *(Shoemaker & Hoard).*

otograph © Sylvia Plachy




the cultural superstructure human l
ings have built upon nature. If t
Swedish Academy was indeed thin
most giving Borges a Nobel, it wo
have been for these two stories, an
few others, for after them his talent
prose became morbidly obsessed wi
the barbaric violence that has ch
acterized Argentine civil life. (It is u
derstood that the Swedes got wind
Borges's dining with Pinochet,
Chile, and felt that this disqualifi
him for the *laudatio* of Nobel's wi

Williamson has Borges caught b
tween the noble sword of his her
grandfather and the gaucho knife. I
mother enforced the one; his fath
the other. Borges went off to his fi
day of school with a knife his fath
gave him for fighting duels on th
playground. A South Carolinian,
have seen knife fights between eleve
year-olds; they are not pretty. The a
complished *cuchillero* (knife fighte
is the Argentine ideal of manhoo
(Eighteenth century English mothe
sent their adolescent sons to swor
fighting academies, traditionally co
ducted by Italians who also taug
dancing and *manners*.)

Borges's stories about knife fightin
are as bloody and savage as Corm
McCarthy's. Sarmiento's subtitle
*Facundo* is "Civilization and Barbarity
Buenos Aires, where Borges lived a
his life, is a half-and-half mixture of th
two, with barbarity in the ascendan
from Juan and Evita Perón forward. I
Borges's old age there were deat
squads "disappearing" thousands
people. A man overheard to say "Ein
stein" in a café was dropped from
small plane into the River Plate, un
charged, untried, and unsentenced. A
crowd of mothers (Borges's amon
them), gathered in protest in front
the President's Palace, were told by
colonel, *The* desaparecidos *are all dead
You can forget about them.* Argentin
was the exile of choice for Nazis i
1945. Many Germans took comfort i
believing that Hitler was safely there

Williamson follows Borges's politica
philosophy from his theoretical belie
in democracy (constantly frustrated b
knowing that in any election Argen
tines will always vote for a *caudillo* lik
Perón) to his pragmatic acceptance o
"enlightened dictators" on out to his de
spairing predilection for anarchy, an

reads Borges's stories and poems as crypted crises in his emotional life. rges lived with his mother, under thumb, until her death at age nine-nine. One loses track of his love af-rs. The great one was a passion for a lhead of Norwegian descent, Norah nge, who turned him down to mar-his chief literary antagonist in the all circle of avant-garde literary mag-nes in Buenos Aires. Against all like-ood, Borges was twice married, first a widow chosen by Mama, more as eeing-eye companion to accompany n on his extensive travels than as a fe. Their honeymoon was in Cam-dge, where Borges was giving the arles Eliot Norton lectures. The wife ed in an apartment provided by Har-rd; Borges, at a hotel. A lawyer back Argentina arranged a legal separa-n (Argentine law prohibited di-rce) soon afterward. After his moth-s death he fell in love with a young man named María Kodama, half-anese, who cherished a feminist re-tance to marry anybody. She served his "Beatrice," helpmeet and muse. l of his life Borges searched for a man like Dante's Beatrice Portinari. e even believed that the *Divine Com-y* was principally a Courtly Love em that has its climax and resolution Dante's seeing the glory of God re-cted in Beatrice's eyes as "the mystic se" of angels and saints shout *hal-ujah!* for all eternity around our Cre-or in Heaven.

Borges admitted to a psychiatrist at he suspected sex of being un-eakably filthy. He married Señorita dama on his deathbed in Geneva, ping to ensure her being his legal ir. The marriage was by proxy, via raguayan lawyers, and did not stop rges's nephews (his sister's children) m contesting his will for the next n years. An atheist, Borges never-eless had a Protestant minister *and* a iest as counselors when death ap-oached, a connoisseur of ambiguity the last. Like Sarmiento before him, found Protestantism a refreshing ternative to Argentina's ultracon-rvative Catholicism—he once said at he was an "amateur Protestant." e is buried a few graves down from an Calvin.

Williamson's ingenuity in deci-ering Borges's cryptic allusions goes furthest out on a limb when he de-codes the dedication to *A Universal History of Infamy*. It is to one "I. J." Here is Williamson's elucidation:

> No one has identified the object of this impassioned dedication, but, given the circumstances, I have no doubt that she was Norah Lange. The initials I. J. remain something of a mystery, but they may stand for "Ingrid Julia." The heroine of Norah Lange's novel, *45 dias y 30 marineros*, is called Ingrid, and in one of the articles by "José Tuntar" about the decadence of ancient Rome, which Borges published at a time when Norah was frequenting parties and so-called orgies with Neruda and Girondo, he referred to the Emperor Augustus's lascivious daughter and his equally dissolute granddaughter, both of whom were called Julia. Additionally, in his story "The Secret Miracle" ("El milagro secreto," collected in *The Aleph*), the protagonist is writing a play about the rivalry between two men for the love of a girl called Julia. Both Ingrid and Julia, therefore, were names that Borges would have associated with his loss of Norah Lange.

Perhaps Borges's loves fled to the embraces of the nearest *peronista* colonel because they couldn't figure out what in the name of God he was talking about. When Borges was a shy adolescent, his father made an appointment for him at a Swiss whorehouse. He couldn't bring himself to go. The trauma of this reluctance, Williamson explains, remained with him throughout life: he had let down his father's chivalric ideal of a man wielding sword and penis with equal fervor, a man with balls enough to engage in a bloody knife fight at every opportunity. On the other hand, he had lived up to his mother's ideal of moral purity.

No wonder he wrote about labyrinths.

When, a few years back, the cultural minister of some South American republic (Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, I forget which) turned up at my door (John Barth had mischievously added my name to a list of State Department–approved writers), he took from his briefcase a glossy photograph of himself standing *near* Borges at some colloquium. This was offered as bona fides that he had talked with Borges. I realized that Borges was a kind of totem that bestowed prestige.




I was only halfway through Williamson's meticulous biography when I felt that the Borges I admired was steadily being replaced by a minor, neurotic, hand-wringing Argentine dilettante whose sense of his own worth was not his discovery by Grove Press and New Directions but that he'd first been published in North America in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

It must be said, however, that his modesty and self-deprecation were genuine. I was present in Louisville when two professors of Spanish attempted to interview him, hampered by their total ignorance of Kipling, Chesterton, Stevenson, and Shaw. It was evident that Borges lived in a world of books, in his rich imagination. He was gentle with his uneducated interlocutors, who had never heard of Edward FitzGerald, Santayana, or William Henry Hudson, and whose opening gambit was to ask him what he thought of Kentucky now that he's *seen* it.

"I have not seen it," he replied patiently. "I am blind."

He added that even though he could not see it either, he would like to travel the length of the Great Trunk Road, like Kim. This got blank stares from the professors, but Borges continued to look like Oedipus at Kolonos, regal and calm.

This embarrassing moment can restore my admiration for Borges. His was, after all, a mind constantly alive to cultures remote from his own. In old age he learned Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic. In Scotland, facing *Norroway*, he recited "Sir Patrick Spens" on the beach. He recited "The Raven" at Poe's grave in Baltimore. He was as much a fan of low culture as of high; he knew his Earle Stanley Gardner and Edgar Rice Burroughs as well as he knew Homer and the *Heimskringla*. If I had Edwin Williamson's skill in exegesis, I could go a long way in demonstrating the influence of Burroughs on Borges. *Tarzan of the Apes* came out in 1914, when Borges, in a Swiss lycée, was at his most impressionable. Tarzan was, like a gaucho, a man of the knife, a *double* (as Borges preferred his characters to be, Lord Greystoke and Rousseau's noble savage), and a man who could converse with leopards. Burroughs's handy way with Arabic may account for Borges's use of it as an exotic language.

[illegible] foreign *other* feels the same; they even shared a genius for naming imaginary places: Pellucidar, Tlön, Opar, Uqbar.

Perhaps one should not read biographies of writers—one shame Richard Ellmann's James Joyce could not have written *Ulysses* much less *Finnegans Wake*. Lives of Shelley, Byron, and Scott leave me wondering who wrote their books. Mark Twain's daughters rejected Joel Chandler Harris as the begetter of Uncle Remus. "Daddy, he's *white*," and the old street person in homemade clothes at Yasnaya Polyana that people made long journeys to meet, that's Tolstoy?

Borges at least anticipated a biographer by writing "Borges y yo." Borges the sub-librarian in a Buenos Aires branch library who was demoted by Perón to Inspector of Chickens on the Civil Service Payroll, rising in time to be Director of the National Library, was not the author of metaphysical fictions signed Jorge Luis Borges. And then there was Georgie Borges, fussbudget and inept lover, and the loyal son who answered to "Baby" (*Niño*) all of his mother's life.

It was not Chicken Inspector that Borges was made, by the way. A clerk typed "aviary" for "apiary": inspector of bee culture. Borges liked the absurdity of "chicken," however, adding "and rabbits" in his account. Although Williamson keeps us abreast of Argentine politics, Borges was a victim rather than a participant in his country's civil violence. He admired the peace of the Swiss cantons.

Sarmiento tells in his *Viajes* of his wonderment in a small Ohio town. A Catholic and Protestant church faced each other on the main street (unthinkable in Argentina). All the children were taught at the same school, by a *woman*! The citizens—Irish, German, Welsh, English—were not knifing each other on the day he visited. They lived in wood-frame houses with no walls around the yard, and seldom bothered to lock their doors. He reported, to a deaf Argentina, as Borges after him, that Americans are an ethical people, caring nothing for a proud family name or aristocratic connections by marriage. The blacksmith sat beside the mayor in church. Even so, Borges followed Mama in knowing that he *criollos* (founding families) are better than everybody else. If Georgie had been given a Nobel, she would have asked if the king of Sweden was kin to anybody important.

Scholarship has followed journalism into assuming that people who have done something notable have relinquished all claim to privacy. Williamson's life of Borges suffers from its relentless snooping into his affairs of the heart, however desperately he has tried to find traces of these emotional disasters in the stories. "Desperate" is the word. For example: There's an innocent street name in one story the name of which suggests *thunder*. Thunder comes from Thor, right? Thor was a Norwegian god; Norah Lange was Norwegian. So in an innocuous street name we can detect Borges still grieving for the lost Nora.

My feeling is that Borges quite early used up his resources. He is straining for effects his readers can't feel when he gets into hypothetical libraries that contain all possible combinations of the alphabet. He fixates on fortune-tellers' crystal balls that show everything in the world at once, on people afflicted with total recall of their past. These wonderments are not functions of a plot. They're exhibited by themselves.

Borges is at his best in his miniature essays, where his opsimathy and lack of an education come across as fresh as paint from a wet swipe of the brush. Some of his erudition is purest tushery, and some of it depends on our sharing his superstition (FitzGerald for instance, as a reincarnation of Omar Khayyám). He himself knew that he would, in time, be caught out in his quasi-plagiarisms. Meanwhile he garnered honorary degrees from the major universities, and lectured as a veritable wizard. He wrote obscure poems. He had the world's honor at the end of every transcontinental flight. And at the end of his life he had, at long last, an apartment of his own with a wife who returned his love in it. The inscription on his tombstone is in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. The Buenos Aires press called him a traitor for dying in Geneva.

# ANYWHERE OUT OF THIS WORLD

## On why all writing is travel writing

By *Nicholas Delbanco*

Discussed in this essay:

*Man After Dark*, by Pico Iyer. Knopf, 2004. 240 pages. $22.95.
*A Taste for Travel: An Anthology*, by John Julius Norwich. Knopf, 1987. 435 pages. $25.



Travel writing is, I think, coeval with writing itself. We move and remember the place that left; from a distance we send letters home. Those scribes who first kept laundry lists in Nineveh or Babylon, those men in Egypt naming names, belong to the one genre. An account of journeys taken or a report at journey's end, a message from the provinces or a dispatch from the capital: each must be written down. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, *The Tale of Genji* on his wanderings: all these record departure and new terrain traversed. And there's a retentiveness also entailed; when the bear goes over the mountain to see what he can see he carries with him—if he be a writer—a quill pen or PC.

In the Western tradition of literature, the common denominator of the *Odyssey* and *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Divine Comedy*—not to mention *Don Quixote* or *Moby-Dick* or *Faust*—is near-constant motion. One way to read the Book of Genesis is to consider that expulsion as a journey out of Eden; the long travail of Moses is a hunt for promised land. So too is the *Aeneid* a travelogue that starts in Troy and ends hard years later in Rome. "The Wanderer" and "The Seafarer" are descriptions of waterlogged distance traversed; Captain Cook and Magellan and Lewis and Clark get parsed now for their prose. Although we're not certain how widely he traveled, Avon's Bard set many of his plays abroad; it sometimes seems as though *all* texts we hold to be enduring ones evoke a world of wonders that at first seem passing strange . . .

This holds just as true for those who—like Jane Austen or Emily Dickinson—remain inside the house. Imagination need be neither time- nor space-bound, finally, and writing gets done at the desk. The stay-at-home may take projected trips or may, like Marcel Proust, remember where he lived when young: *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* is a remembrance not merely of time but of scenes and places past. The writer may be imprisoned, as was the Oscar Wilde of *De Profundis*, or, like Charles Darwin, confined to a cabin on the HMS *Beagle*—but each and all of them are travel writers in the largest sense: I have been there, witnessed it, and am come alone to tell thee what I saw.

Marco Polo—who may or may not have gone where he said—announced his voyage thus:

> Emperors and kings, dukes and marquises, counts, knights, and townsfolk, and all . . . will find all the great wonders and curiosities of Greater Armenia and Persia, of the Tartars and of India, and of many other territories. Our book will relate them to you plainly in due order, as they were related by Messer Marco Polo, a wise and noble citizen of Venice, who has seen them with his own eyes. There is also much here that he has not seen but has heard from men of credit and veracity. . . .

Those who once were travelers are tourists now; those who set out for points unknown, whether pilgrims or Crusaders, have been supplanted by the gang who follows where a tour guide leads. Open any airline magazine or travel section in the Sunday paper and you'll find an industry devoted to what Mark Twain called "Innocents Abroad." To begin with, it was only the nobility, or their cast-off sons and marriageable daughters, who went away for pleasure or profit; in the last two hundred years all that has changed. As John Julius Norwich puts it, in his anthology, *A Taste for Travel*:

> [By] 1815 . . . Travel had ceased to be the prerogative of the gentry; the roads of the Continent were now thronged with middle-class Englishmen who had

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Illustration by Steven Dana

the Industrial Revolution and were anxious to understand and appreciate all that Europe had to offer. Increased numbers soon resulted in improved facilities: the first Channel steamer was introduced in 1816, a regular service between Dover and Calais was inaugurated in 1821 and by the 1830s there were almost as many crossings as there are today. In France and Germany, Italy and Switzerland, hotels sprang up like mushrooms along the main routes. . . .

Today it's easy to forget how recent was the shift. The cobbled early travelers who set out from England or Beijing or Calcutta may well have done so with servants, but their exploits are reported on as individual: X made ten thousand miles on foot, Y traveled twenty years and through forty kingdoms, Z acquired fifty languages and a hundred children before he came back home. *A Sentimental Journey*, as Laurence Sterne would have it, was one man's ambling ramble through France and Italy. The Romantics on their walking tours of Switzerland or the Lake District wandered with a boon companion or, more often than not, alone. Lord Norwich turns up his well-bred English nose at the idea of collective travel and those who pay with vouchers for a pre-arranged forced march:

> The man who started it all was that disagreeable old abstainer Thomas Cook, who, already by the middle of the century, had developed the idea of insulating his clients as much as possible from the uncouth conditions all too frequently prevailing in foreign parts by swathing them in a protective cocoon of block bookings, [illegible] dangerous of all—temperance. He began indeed by [illegible] on the very first excursion [illegible] organized, [illegible] To-day 5 July 1841, the 570 people intrepid enough to [illegible] shillings [illegible] to Loughborough Market [illegible] services of a full brass band, to say nothing of tea and buns at Mr Paget's Park. The age of the tourist had arrived.

Most contemporary travel writers set out with the more-or-less conscious purpose of writing a book. The [illegible] death list was [illegible]

[illegible] Paul Theroux and Jonathan Raban, [illegible] Gretel Ehrlich or Terry Tempest [illegible] it's with the apparatus of retention and [illegible] Baedeker or a *Guide Bleu* we have [illegible] respecting bookstore; there's nearly [illegible] its winter and [illegible] or Technicolor described . . .

The last [illegible] (Theroux, Raban, Ehrlich, Williams) [illegible] cident that two of them are women. This was not always the case. For reasons too obvious to belabor, the travel writers of the fifteenth or the eighteenth century were almost without exception male, and most of them well educated and well heeled. Several of the true heroes of the genre are its early heroines: Mary Kingsley and Freya Stark went where almost literally no single woman went before, and Beryl Markham and Martha Gellhorn are easily the adventuring equals of Antoine de St. Exupéry and Ernest Hemingway. One way of looking at the issue of "women's liberation" would be [illegible] just such reportage; there are more women writing for publication today than at any previous moment in our history. Travel writing is a genre that's no longer gender-bound.

> *For my part, I travel not to go anywhere, but to go. I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move.*
>
> Robert Louis Stevenson.

Within such overarching inclusiveness, [illegible] Lincoln or Joan of Arc are travel writing [illegible] world of the past. Adventure tales through time and space aren't within my compass here: the historical novel [illegible]

[illegible] book imagined, not reported on. [illegible] equally with *1984* or *2001*, which [illegible] seemed future facing, or *Twenty Th* [illegible] whole field of science fiction: bo[illegible] about robots and extraterrestrials [illegible] travel writing of a kind, but not [illegible] kind I mean.

A ship's log makes an inadvert[illegible] book, as do a naturalist's field no[illegible] the journal of a journey with no pr[illegible] thought of audience. Much of what [illegible] read today is a by-blow of such voy[illegible] ing the first account of the North P[illegible] the first of North America, were co[illegible] posed by authors who would not d[illegible] scribe themselves primarily as such [illegible] whose "letters home" were not d[illegible] patched with publication in mind. Th[illegible] suggestively named professional t[illegible] "underwriter" might require deta[illegible] and the owners of a galleon would ma[illegible] "manifest" the lists of crew and car[illegible] but personal opinion is what we as re[illegible] ers hunger for; it invigorates eyew[illegible] nessing and quickens the long dead.

There's a subset of the genre tro[illegible] as it were, the captive class: a slave [illegible] bondswoman's narrative, a farme[illegible] wife carried off by an Indian tribe. N[illegible] every traveler is literate or mainta[illegible] a journal; not every Robinson Crus[illegible] finds pen and paper to hand. But thi[illegible] of Mungo Park or Richard Burto[illegible] John Speke or Henry Stanley—tho[illegible] wanderers who made their fortune [illegible] reporting news of Africa—and *intenti*[illegible] enters in. When Boswell followed J[illegible] Johnson on his journey through t[illegible] Hebrides he knew he would rememb[illegible] it and come back with a book.

> *Travel remains a journey in whatever we can't explain, explain away. . . . I know in m[illegible] own case that a trip has really been su[illegible] cessful if I come back sounding stran[illegible] even to myself; if, in some sense, I ne[illegible] er come back at all, but remain up[illegible] night unsettled by what I've seen.*
>
> Pico Iy[illegible]
> "The Place Across t[illegible]
> Mountains" in *Sun After Da[illegible]*

Two strains seem worth disentan[illegible] gling in this common cloth. Firs[illegible] and perhaps most frequent, is a r[illegible] port from far away—the news se[illegible]

ck from a little-known or rarely sited part of the world: a tribe or rrain that appears inhospitable, a cord of hardships endured. The iter travels long and hard and ares wide-eyed at landscape and havior that feel foreign. The place d the people merit describing, and ough we no longer report on ree-headed men or single-breasted omen—fire-breathing dragons, ch Ness monsters, and the like—ch travelogues traffic in distance, e wonder of what's hard to find.

Almost by definition, this variety travel writing depends on the first ew. The voyager attains a premised d and does so once—or, possibly, oyed by success and fame, not to ention an expense account, returns. ie point is, however, that he or she es as a stranger, and what's remark-le in these accounts depends on first pressions: a freshness, an alertness, ense of something new. So it isn't ep-rooted knowledge but an ama-ir's enthusiasm that signals destina-n and establishes the tone. A good ough artist may perhaps be able to nvey such alertness during a visit to ndon or Rome, but the odds are bet-if the place attained is Patagonia or tar Pradesh.

This sort of exploration is always provisational; it reports on happy cident or unhappily being blown off urse, and the writer profits from a ior ignorance. Indeed, it's almost a ie qua non of the genre; you can't dertake a voyage to map your own metown. So expertise in this case eans not familiarity with but a fresh counter with the alien, the other. avel writing of this kind requires a ysical distance—the wanderer on ain or steamship or horseback or gsled, going somewhere hard to get , and for the first time. Whatever he she reports is more than what was own before or we as readers knew. scovery is crucial here: the difficult rney "anywhere out of this world." The phrase is Baudelaire's. He meant this a yearning for what's far away d rarely visited and therefore doubly ductive. The "bazaar" and the izarre" are cognate terms, and the e of the tropics or a pure uncharted floe is, for the heart sore, strong. ch stories start often as not in the city, with a man or woman sick of prior worldliness or a "damp, drizzly November in my soul"—as Melville's Ishmael puts it—and in thrall to the unknown. It's no doubt not an accident that Melville's major commercial success came as a travel writer; his books *Typee* and *Omoo* retail exotica. This is the sort of book in which the voyager hears siren songs and wanders where they beckon; it deals with the South Seas or the hidden mountain kingdom of Nepal. Again—almost by definition—it's a trip undertaken alone. And the farther the better, the farthest the best: nothing difficult is easy, and few rainbows end next door.

In the twenty-first century, however, such destinations grow harder to find, and solitary explorations are a thing of the vanishing past. When the first Westerner made his disguised way into Mecca or her camel-assisted trek across the Sahara, he or she could not have imagined the legion being herded down those well-worn paths today. Sir Walter Raleigh and Hakluyt shared as voyagers a breath-held sense of danger, an implicit and sometimes explicit assertion that much was at stake and at risk. War correspondents belong within this category, though the purpose of their coverage is not to chart terrain. And the governing verb form is an imperative: Reader, look over my shoulder. Spend two years with me before the mast or follow where the song lines lead; few have come this way before.

Much of the commercial popularity of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* or the novel *Lost Horizon*—to take only a pair of examples of stories retrieved from the "ends of the earth"—derived from just such a remoteness. But now that the globe is a village, it's nowhere near as difficult to reach the Gulf of Aqaba or the town of Kathmandu, and reports from what used to be called Arabia or the Orient require not a rare first view but grounded expertise. Books about smoke jumpers and coal miners and bridge builders are in this sense travel writing; they provide the reader with detailed information about a way of life and a set of skills unlike the reader's own. There's a special subset of the genre recovered from those who failed to return: the letters from a battlefield or found in a tent in arctic tundra or raised up from the sea. So



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now we get *The Perfect Storm* or *Into Thin Air*—accounts of a kind of extremity but not an unexplored one; the action itself may be special and strange but the landscape has been long since mapped.

Here's the entirety of Chapter XLII, "Concerning Owls," from *The Natural History of Iceland*, written by Niels Horrebow in 1758: "There are no owls of any kind in the whole island."

By contrast, therefore, there are more contemporary books that deal with semi-permanence in a "New Found Land." This is the sort of account—think of Peter Mayle or Francis Mayes—in which the stranger settles down and reports on what it meant to grow acclimatized to Provence or Tuscany. Here the narrative arc almost always consists of ignorance that yields to understanding, a bedazzled attraction to a place that deepens into love. And it requires the clarification provided by hindsight and time. The writer reports on local custom and how he or she—first quizzical and then convinced—learns how the natives cook or farm or court or kill or renovate a house. Often these dispatches too are sent back from "the field"; more often they are written after the fact as memoir.

This sort of book is less about wandering than sitting still, but it too belongs to the genre. It is powered by the elegiac impulse rather more than by astonishment; it reports on custom embraced rather than in shock recorded, and the pattern is one of incremental pleasure as the writer settles in. There's a standard shift of attitude; what at first seemed nonsensical starts to make sense; what required explaining to begin with grows, over time, self-evident. It's the relativist's credo, in effect: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do . . ."

Here it matters if the writer arrives in "Rome" as an adult or was to the manner if not manor born. If the former—as with Mayle and Mayes—the book may be written while still in residence; if the latter, the perspective shifts and Arcady is at a remove. "I *had* a farm in Africa" (Isak Dinesen's famous phrase, my emphasis) is the operational mode—the past tense suggesting it's all over but the writing; memory preserves a place and time long gone.

Where the first [illegible] of two modes consists of a report from afar, this second one by contrast speaks of lost familiarity. The witness has moved on. From the distance of both space and time the writer reconstructs his youth as a tenant farmer's son in the South, the rigors of her childhood in Botswana or Bengal. The beloved mother or grandfather is dead, the custom of sheep shearing or snake charming has been altered by the trappings of modernity. The tribe that once was unencumbered now watches TV through the cold winter nights, the shaman owns a cell phone, and what used to be unending prairie is now a housing tract. If the writer writes of vanished youth, he or she may do so for the purpose of score settling or as a lament for yesteryear or with a dry-eyed dispassion; what's constant is this sense of distance and a world elsewhere.

It's the difference, in effect, between an act of *discovery* and one of *recovery*; as an autobiographical account, it reports on information gained or innocence long lost. Therefore the noun of travel depends upon its yoked preposition; it's travel *to* or travel *from*, and much is entailed by the shift.

Pico Iyer has been charting this terrain since 1988 and his first travel book, *Video Night in Kathmandu*. *Sun After Dark*, his new book, brings the total of such inquiries to seven; his other titles include *Falling off the Map*, *Sushi in Bombay*, *Jetlag in L.A.*, *Tropical Classical*, and *The Global Soul*. As these names suggest, the described locations vary but the enterprise is constant: a man adrift yet purposive, taking "flights into the foreign"—which serves as the subtitle of his recent collection of essays. As Iyer puts it, "The traveler, if he comes from a place of comfort, travels, in part, to be stood on his head; to lose track of tenses, or at least to be back to essentials, free of the details of home."

Although this writer is deliberately personal, deploying the first-person pronoun throughout, his texts recall those of Bruce Chatwin—another wanderer of great sophistication with a thirst for places "primitive" and hard to reach. The authors he studies—Kazuo Ishiguro, W. G. Sebald—inhabit a n[illegible] native land; the celebrities he interviews—Leonard Cohen, the Dalai Lama—are monks. Whether in Yemen, Haiti, Ethiopia, Laos, or Bolivia, Iyer hunts his own place in displacement and seems most at home when lea[illegible]

Here's a line of cultural anthropology from one of the first tourists, Herodotus: "Apart from the fact that they prostitute their daughters, the Lydian way of life is not unlike our own."

Consider, by contrast, this account by an outraged Englishman, one Dr. Birch, of his time in the presence of Peter the Great (who founded St. Petersburg in 1703) and how the czar entertained.

> There are twenty-four cooks belonging to the kitchen of the Russian court, who are all Russians; and, as people of that nation use a great deal of onion, garlic, and train oyl, in dressing their meat, and employ linseed and walnut oyl in their provisions, there is such an intolerable stink in their kitchen, that no stranger is able to bear it, especially as the cooks being such nasty fellows that the very sight of them is enough to turn one's stomach. . . .
>
> The number of the persons invited is commonly two or three hundred, though there is room for no more than about one hundred, at four or five tables. But as there is no place assigned to any body, and none of the Russians are willing to go home with an empty stomach, every body is obliged to seize his chair and hold it with all his force, if he will not have it snatched from him.
>
> The Czar being come in, and having chosen a place for himself, there is such scuffling and fighting for chairs that nothing more scandalous can be seen in any country. . . .
>
> At great entertainments it frequently happens that nobody is allowed to go out of the room from noon till midnight. Hence it is easy to imagine what a pickle a room must be in, that is full of people who drink like beasts, and none of them escape being dead drunk.
>
> They often tie eight or ten young mice on a string, and hide them under green peas, or in such soups as these. Russians have the greatest appetite for this; which sets them a *kecking* and vomiting in a most beastly manner when they come to the bottom and discover the trick. They often bait cats, wolves, ravens and the like

their pastries, and when the company have eat them up, they tell them what stuff they have in their guts.

Let me confess to personal experience of the several kinds of travel writing I've described. Some fifteen years ago or so, had a friend—a publisher—who nted to revive the genre, or at st to make a commercial venture America of what had been more pular abroad. His notion was to mmission books by "an interesting nd in an interesting place," and flatteringly invited me to be one his first authors in what became e "Traveler" series of Atlantic onthly Press. He was well funded, ll disposed, and at the lunch ere we discussed the project I had o many Bloody Marys and my ad, it must be admitted, was a od deal less than clear.

So was his. I remember asking if 'd pay for a trip up Everest and he d, Sure, Sherpas, the whole show I remember asking if he'd pay for triders in the Outback and he said, e entire rig, why not . . . So by the e lunch was over and we'd gone r separate ways I had effectively ned up, signed on, and soon enough contract arrived, saying simply icholas Delbanco, Travel Book." t I had no idea at all of where to vel to.

Reality set in. In sober truth I felt too and unadventurous for the Hima- as or Australia's barren interior; my e and I had two daughters by then, d I was happily domestic and didn't nt to leave for long or travel far away. e more I thought about it the less I s inclined to try for category one of at I've been trying to categorize, and fell back on the notion of category o. This entailed a landscape of which had a more or less sustained expe- nce: a report, in effect, on strangeness wn familiar. The place I settled on s one I'd often settled in, and it did alify as a beloved countryside: vence. In time it did become a book: *nning in Place: Scenes from the South rance*.

But the problem here, of course, is it Provence has been described of and well; it has been charted to millimeter, and one can barely visit a museum or café without encountering a legion of other travel writers taking notes. It's scarcely terra incognita, and there's the real risk of cliché. My solution, such as it was, was to turn inward—and to report upon the way the landscape looked to me in childhood, young manhood, young married manhood, as a father of a daughter, then two daughters. It was an inward trip at least as much as an outer exploration, and for me at least the journey proved rewarding.

It's difficult to know, in this epoch of Heisenberg and Einstein, what is absolute, what relative, and why. Do we change as witnesses, or does what we witness change, or both; does it alter because of the viewing, and is our estimate altered by the very consciousness of sight? These issues of philosophy and mathematics are domestic riddles also; was it always just like this, and did we fail to notice? So the chance to see for a second or third time a place we remember vividly is a chance worth taking; the six or seven stays in Provence on which *Running in Place* reports were, in effect, stages of age.

As a result of that book—it appeared in 1989 and has been reprinted since—I acquired some small reputation as a travel writer. This was an unintended consequence, and one I had my doubts about, but the phone did ring. Soon enough I found myself becoming precisely the sort of voyager I disparaged above: the one with an expense account who goes not so much to blaze a trail as to make certain it will be well marked. So I wrote a piece for *Travel and Leisure* called "Up in the U.P." because I'd never been to that part of Michigan and needed an excuse to go; for much the same reason and because they waived the entrance fee, I wrote on Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum. The Greek government, to take a more romantic example, wanted to establish the Mani peninsula as a tourist destination, and my wife and I bounced and jiggled along the newly paved roads of the region in order to ballyhoo hotels. It's a wonderful part of the Peloponnesus and I have no regrets; a glossy travel magazine footed the bill, and when Olympic Airways lost track of Elena's suitcase they bestirred themselves mightily to find it once I dropped that magazine's name.

But it's a strange way to see a landscape—spurious, largely, and traversed with the subsidized intention of spending a good deal of money in order to encourage your readership to do the same; that original impulse to escape (as in Baudelaire's yearning desire for "anywhere out of this world") has been transformed past recognition in the travel pages of *House & Garden* or *Gourmet*. It's a far cry indeed from *Mornings in Mexico* or *Sea and Sardinia* (D. H. Lawrence's travel memoirs) or Eric Newby's classic *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*.

I name this last because decades ago we too passed through the Khyber Pass from Kabul to Jalalabad. Elena and I hired a driver to pilot us along the lunar landscape; this was well before the Taliban controlled the countryside, but even so it seemed threatful and fierce: steep-pitched gorges, boulder-strewn hills, no water one could see. It's hard to conceive how this might have been the Silk Road or a populous trade route, since nothing in it represents prosperity or seems to welcome and enable life. Endless-seeming vistas of dried mud and dun-colored chasms, the track a slightly flatter, slightly purposive declivity through the surrounding wastes. At a certain point we stopped for lunch—wax-paper wrapped sandwiches the hotel in Kabul had provided—and because there was, the driver said, a bit of both water and shade.

All I could see was rock. We parked in the flat sheltered space and stepped out to stretch. The wind was high. I steeled myself and took a very short walk in the Hindu Kush, and then the wind shifted so that with total clarity I heard, "Do you take lemon or sugar—one or two lumps?—and do you prefer milk or cream in your tea?" It was, it turned out, the wife of the British ambassador, and she was regaling some visitor of consequence with cucumber sandwiches and a proper British refreshment while the chauffeur dusted off the Jag; this dry oasis was the recognized stopping place on the road to Jalalabad, and there were two cars parked on the two sides of the one rock. One has to travel long and far to be alone.

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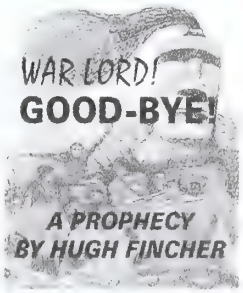
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# LETTERS


continued from page 7


the Pentagon's Defense Threat [illegible] duction Agency (DTRA) develo[illegible] "Project Bacchus," which bui[illegible] small-scale germ facility at [illegible] Nevada Test Site.

*David Isenberg*
Senior Analyst
British American Security Infor[illegible] tion Council (BASIC)
Washington, D.C.

Ed Regis's "Our Own Anthr[illegible] brought the following to mind[illegible] classmate of mine, when drafted, [illegible] unlucky enough to be assigned to [illegible] army's Chemical Corps and to F[illegible] Detrick, where he served until [illegible] charge. Upon completing his assi[illegible] ment, the signing-out major offe[illegible] one more caution. "Nothing t[illegible] you learned, heard, or saw here [illegible] leave Fort Detrick, ever."

"Not to worry, Major," the [illegible] man replied. "I'm ashamed of it t[illegible]

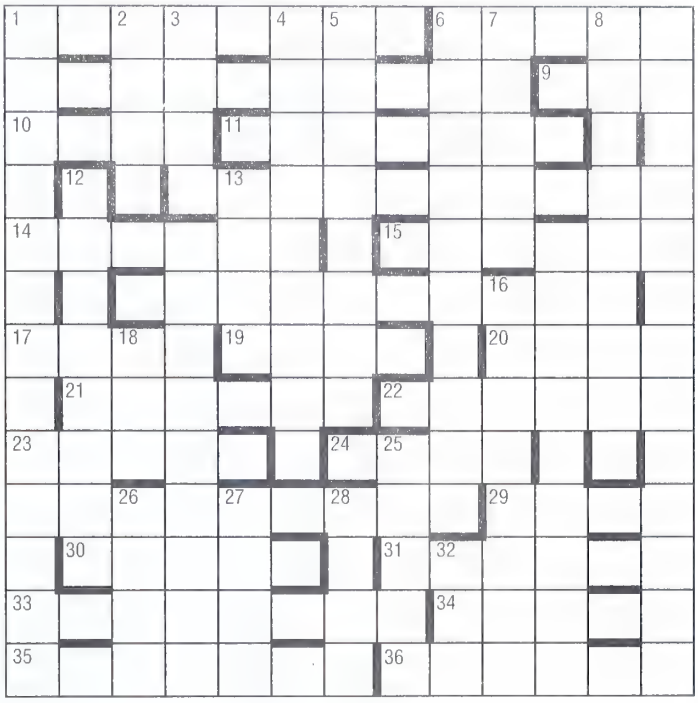
*Jack Cunniff*
Aptos, Calif.

## Trust Busters

Victoria Wolcott's letter to [illegible] editor ["Red and Blue in Black [illegible] White," Letters, July] in response [illegible] Thomas Frank's "Lie Down [illegible] America" [Essay, April] is right [illegible] point, and one might even sugge[illegible] read of Henry Bamford Parkes's *[illegible] American Experience: An Interpr[illegible] tion of the History and Civilization [illegible] the American People* to substanti[illegible] her claim. In his text, Parkes ch[illegible] the United States' transition fr[illegible] Thomas Jefferson's agrarian dem[illegible] racy to what has come to be kn[illegible] as corporate America.

The masses of the Americ[illegible] people, he explains, accepted t[illegible] process in part because they had [illegible] come enthralled by the hope of ra[illegible] industrial progress and the pron[illegible] of wealth for all. Unfortunately, t[illegible] were unable to see any relevant [illegible] tinction between the freedom [illegible] property rights of the small ow[illegible] and those of the big corporation.

*Michael Grella*
Jupiter, Fla.



# Split Personalities

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

Eight diagram entries are unclued. Their identities must be deduced from the answers to the Extra Clues.

Clue answers include five proper names and one foreign word. As always, mental repunctuation of a clue is the key to its solution. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 77.

ACROSS

1. Advertisers throw team (8)
6. Danes performing in Ballet de Monte Carlo? (5)
9. Fine dress gets you cross without a cross (3)
10. Flying solo? Capital! (4)
11. With one's nose up, see a toilet run (7)
14. In short, a lot of musicians playing tag in a plant (6)
15. Kind of acid reflux around one with relatives (6)
17. Nothing fills up in a day (4)
19. Food in water makes you reeeeally happy! (4)
20. A private love for profit from capital (4)
21. For shame! Sit back in times when all are playing (6)
22. Lighter reveals two people topless—that is right (6)
23. Small cube with this importance (5)
24. A loony upsets something that comes in cans (4)
29. Lather comes in cans (4)
30. Time being not endless, Episcopal takes number in (5)
31. Italian town, in retrospect, is twice as pre-eminent (6)
33. Ran over one of the crew, for closer (8)
34. Partner of Barbie doll loses pounds for sport in the Orient (5)
35. Bring back a little buggy, after it's covered by my disabled boy (4,3)
36. Arming, broke from money borrowed for purchases (6)

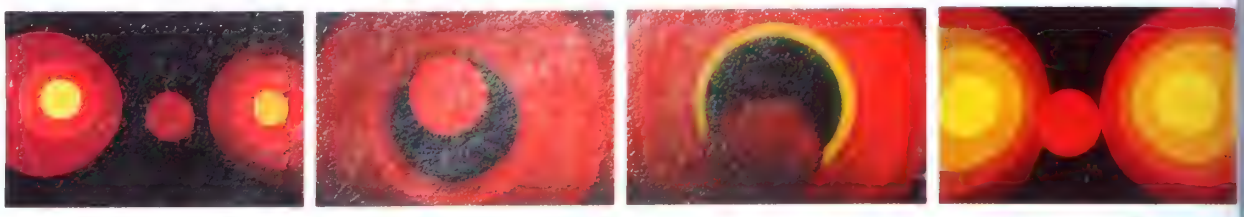
DOWN

2. Listen to end of story! (4)
3. A lot of bull sounds from a reptile (4)
4. Clumsy, backward American boy, one involved in nonsense (9)
5. Very large moon, sure to be revisited (8)
6. Excellent in hip-hop, swinging is getting minister disordered! (10)
7. Psychiatrist from the year one, 50% duller (5)
8. Torpedoes one sinks—some shipbuilders take them for granted! (9)
12. Making something out of nothing could produce anoretic reaction (8)
13. Midsection of sailing ship? (4)
16. A royal fool caught by a Lady's harrier (8)
18. "Got Milk?"—get it here (3)
25. Get weapons from branch of the United Nations? (5)
26. Bit of color now lost (4)
27. Rob Roy, for example, served up to Mr. Lewis (4)
28. *The Thing*-type thing (4)
32. Intro to skating music (3)

EXTRA CLUES

a. Put hand out for bee, say (3)
b. Passion is part of theater (4)
c. Stern taskmaster's final hearing (4)
d. Spy gives Bond character cheer (4)
e. Police man ends up arresting (5)
f. Recycle garbage, after third is thrown away (5)
g. Dupe nervous roper (5)
h. James, the writer and creator of *Eggs on Toast*—'e's out-of-sight! (5)
i. *Hurt Bi*—the man would! (5)
j. Chinese painting table (5)
k. First person framed by money from fix (6)
l. Trendy number like Mozart's minuet, one of nine typically (6)
m. Anticipate, except after an exchange of letters (6)
n. Covered ground (garden ground) (6)
o. He, for one, makes Reagan love wordplay outside (7)
p. Curious pattern of Ontario speech (7)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Split Personalities," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by September 11. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the November issue. Winners of the July puzzle, "Crazy Quilt," are Eric Brook, Eagan, Minnesota; Robert Loy, Charleston, South Carolina; and David Mackie, Seattle, Washington.



# FINDINGS

The French government reported that the number of cows that have become infected with mad cow disease over the past thirteen years is 300 times greater than was previously suspected, and that nearly 50,000 infected animals have entered the human food chain. Health officials in the United States were thinking of banning the practice of feeding pork, chicken, and other animal parts to cattle because pigs and chickens eat rendered cattle parts and thus could transmit mad-cow-disease prions. There was apparently no plan to stop giving cattle huge quantities of bovine blood, however, and animals will continue to consume the feathers and excrement of 8.5 billion chickens. Prions were discovered in the muscle of a sheep infected with scrapie; experts were very quick to say that this did not necessarily pose any danger to humans who eat lamb, even though scrapie prions are widely believed to have caused mad cow disease. A prion expert at the National Institutes of Health predicted that "within the next year, somebody will make a big splash by finding it in the muscles of cattle and the beef industry will go crazy." A horticulturalist in Florida announced a new low-carb potato. A study of infant formula revealed disturbing levels of dangerous bacteria, including *Enterobacter sakazakii*, which causes meningitis. The FDA approved the use of blood-sucking leeches for medicinal purposes. Chiquita International was busy engineering bananas that taste like different fruits, the USDA reclassified frozen French fries as "fresh vegetables," and a new study concluded that the children of fat people are more likely to be fat.

Britain's Environment Agency said that male fish are being changed to females because of hormone-laden sewage dumped into rivers. A federal appeals court ruled that the U.S. government's standards for the proposed Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste dump in Nevada are insufficient because they extend only for 10,000 years. Archaeologists found an underground Egyptian maze filled with mummies, and new research suggested that Neanderthals matured faster than humans. German scientists found a 30-million-year-old hummingbird fossil, and geologists discovered that bacteria created the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. Scientists said that a meteor the size of Mount Everest crashed into northern Australia 251 million years ago and caused the "great dying" at the end of the Permian period. Graveyards were filling up in South Africa.

Spanish researchers determined that laser-assisted uvulopalatoplasty does not cure snoring. Confused brown pelicans were observed crashing into streets in Arizona because heat waves rising from the pavement looked like water. Four organ-transplant recipients died from rabies; all four received tissue from the same infected donor. An expert at Aberystwyth University warned that witches' broom disease and frosty pod disease could devastate chocolate supplies in coming years, and scientists said that some dogs are able to predict when their owners are about to have an epileptic seizure. It was proved that Madagascar's fat-tailed dwarf lemurs hibernate in the winter dry season. A psychologist claimed that influenza might be responsible for up to 14 percent of schizophrenia cases. A sinkhole in Louisiana ate a giraffe and an ostrich. A mule reportedly gave birth in Bhutan. Astronomers were looking for shadows of the Big Bang, and European scientists found thirty missing supermassive black holes. New research suggested that planets are formed out of elongated dust chains or "worms" rather that fluffy dust blobs. A Japanese inventor unveiled a new invisibility cloak that uses a material made of thousands of tiny beads called "retro-reflectum." Two separate teams of scientists reported that they had successfully teleported individual atoms a fraction of a millimeter. British researchers concluded that sudden infant death syndrome is more likely to happen on weekends. SARS was found in tears. ■

*The Elfriede Fischinger Trust/Fischinger Archive, 1942–2004. www.oskarfischinger.org.*



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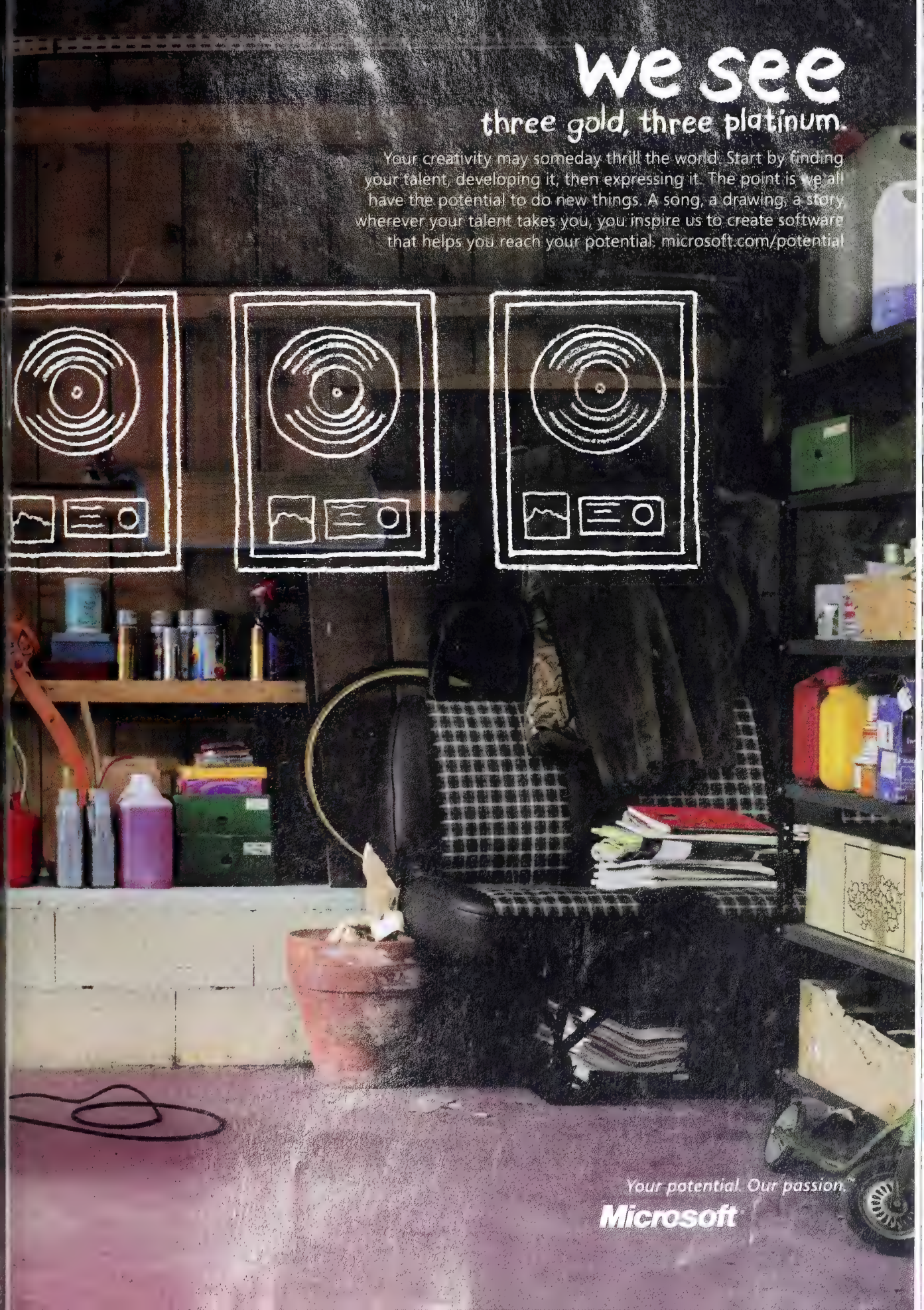
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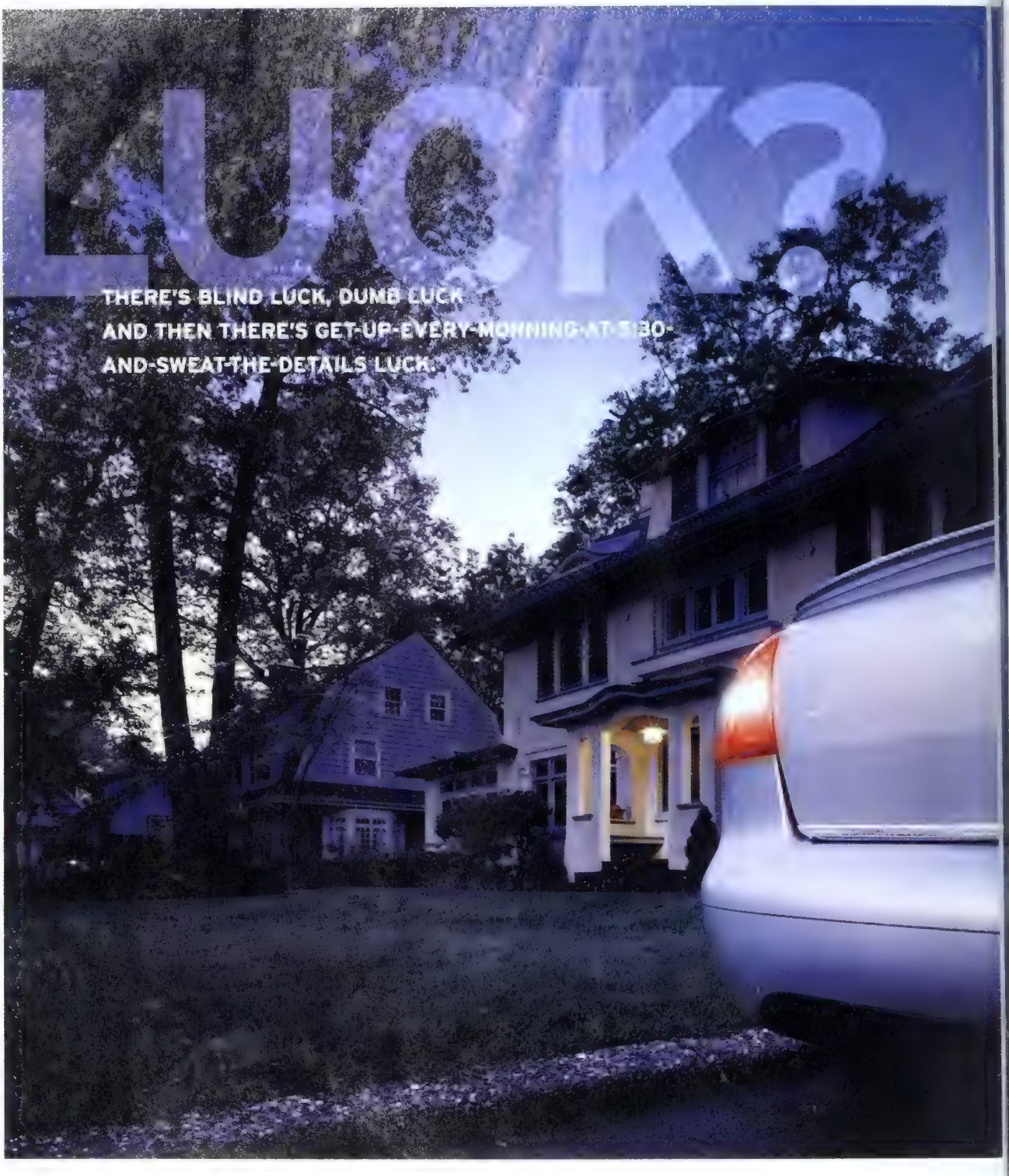
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# LETTERS

## Back to the Future

I was most impressed to read of Lewis H. Lapham's ability to travel in time in "Tentacles of Rage" [Essay, September]. As far as I can tell, on the day I received my copy of *Harper's Magazine*, the Republican convention had yet to take place, and living in New York, I think I would have noticed. Admittedly, the pabulum will be predictable (barring some unforeseen event), but it seems awfully sloppy of Lapham to discuss feelings he had while watching something he has yet to watch, simply in order to put some additional feathers on one of his rhetorical barbs. What is most appalling is that he chose an actual piece of journalism, rather than his accustomed punditry, for this rather silly fillip. This doesn't exactly give me faith in his understanding of what it is reporters actually do.

On the other hand, if he has in fact traveled in time, I would appreciate it if he could let all of us subscribers know the outcome of the forthcoming election.

*Matthew Ostrowski*
Brooklyn

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*Lewis H. Lapham responds:*

As Mr. Ostrowski properly no... the rhetorical invention was si... The mistake, however, is a seri... one, and if I'd had my wits about... as an editor, I wouldn't have let... author mix up his tenses in ma... script or allowed him in page pr... to lapse into poetic license. Both... us regret the injury done to... magazine and apologize, wholehe... edly, to its readers.

## Speak, Progressives

The entire thrust of "Liberal... Regained" [Forum, August] appea... to be based on the premise that... political institutions, and the rule... the game, are permanent and... mutable, and that progressives n... therefore confine their efforts... working within the limits impo... by those institutions and rul... rather than seeking to change th... This approach not only ignores h... progressive change was acco... plished in the past but also reflecti... basic failure to think strategica... and pragmatically. Our two-pa... system is a major obstacle to prog... sive change, so building a compe... tive and democratic multi-party s... tem is therefore an urgent necess... To do so will require enacting ma... electoral reform: instant run-off v... ing would be a start.

Only a competitive and democr... ic multi-party system will broad...




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the national political debate, give power and voice to social movements, strengthen alliances among distinct groups of progressive voters, and energize the 100 million voters who have dropped out of the electoral process. Such a system will make it possible to forge a progressive majority, which would include a transformed Democratic Party.

The way forward may not be easy, but it is clear. Progressives need to build on the historic accomplishments of the women's and civil rights movements of the twentieth century. Those movements fought for and won the right to vote. Now it is time to fight for the right to vote *for* something.

*Patrick Barrett*
Madison, Wis.

If I were Grover Norquist, I would circulate the August forum for all my cronies to read as clear proof that the "progressive" movement does not offer any viable threat to the hegemony of the right. Ride John McCain's and Ross Perot's coattails? No wonder people think "liberalism" is dead.

The forum's participants seem to cede "God" to conservatives, which is a grave mistake. The overwhelming majority of Americans believe in God, and many, if not most, progressive social movements have actually been led and populated by people of faith, including the civil rights movement (Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), the Rainbow/Push Coalition (Reverend Jesse Jackson), the movement to abolish the death penalty (Sister Helen Prejean), and the movement to close the infamous School of the Americas (Father Roy Bourgeois). In the last decade alone, religious leaders and their congregations have energized college campuses across the United States in ways not seen since the 1960s, leading to, among other things, the huge and extremely well-organized anti-globalization movement.

*Wes Howard-Brook*
Issaquah, Wash.

It is truly amazing that six intelligent and knowledgeable progressives could convene for a serious discussion called "Liberalism Regained" and proceed to discuss neither the reasons why liberalism has become a dirty word to be "avoid[ed] as if it were the plague" nor how to remedy the situation, except with very vague and abstract appeals to some new "institutional force."

Liberalism is the social and political expression of secular humanism, which has become another dirty word. Indeed, secular humanism has been rightly identified as the foundation of the thoroughly discredited, atheistic, and utopian social philosophies of Marxism, socialism, and communism, and as such, it is a noble doctrine for unbelievers. Even today, right-wingers often identify Democrats as socialists or Communists when secular humanism is actually a modern, secularized version of what has been for millennia a spiritual humanism. For 300 years, the rising tides of atheism and materialism have completely corrupted the very foundations of Christian humanism. This is what must be "regained." We must restore the spiritual foundations of humanism in order to "regain" the legitimacy of liberal ideals in the minds and hearts of Americans.

*Robert Van Arsdale*
Questa, N.Mex.

Ron Daniels identifies what is needed to revitalize the progressive movement as a progressive organization that can pressure the Democratic Party, support Republican progressives when appropriate, and even run its own candidates. I am disappointed that neither he nor anyone else in the forum mentioned the Working Families Party, which has become a significant progressive force in New York politics in a few short years just as Daniels advocates: by using fusion, or cross-endorsement, voting, which is now allowed in several states.

*Frances Moore Lappé*
Cambridge, Mass.

The obsessive focus on the Republican "message machine" offers little hope that the progressive crusaders of the Democratic Party will solve the real problem: The U.S. [e]lectorate is hungry for new solut[ions] not spin.

Most Americans are highly pra[g]matic and solution-oriented, no [m]atter what their ideology. They app[re]ciate innovation and embrace prob[lem]-solving ideas. For better or for w[orse] privatizing Social Security, ending [the] welfare state, funding faith-based [or]ganizations, making abortion ill[egal] and waging pre-emptive wars are [not] tion plans on the new conserv[ative] agenda, not messaging points. [They] present new solutions to old probl[ems], whether one is in agreement [with] these solutions or not. I am eage[r to] see the same type of solution-orie[nted] ideas from the Democratic Party. [As] the forum's participants suggest, [the] opportunity is now ripe for the Dem[o]crats to be a truly "progressive" p[arty] with solutions to take us into a be[tter] brighter future.

*Gia Medeiros*
Boulder, Colo.

I disagree with Ron Daniels [that] progressives lack vision. Progress[ives] want to live in a society that is [so]cially democratic and ecologic[ally] sustainable and that maximizes i[ndi]vidual freedom. These conside[ra]tions may seem vague, but they [do] make up a vision. Progressives n[eed] only pursue that vision with intell[ec]tual courage.

The progressives' predicamen[t is] that in the current political la[nd]scape, they are invisible. There [is a] large constituency in the Uni[ted] States, however, that is basic[ally] progressive and will vote progress[ive]ly when given the chance. The e[xis]tence of this constituency is [as] Kevin Phillips notes, the primary [re]son of the McCain, Perot, and [Buc]hanan campaigns, which mobil[ized] voters with progressive appeals [and] likely enjoyed their relative succ[ess] as much because of the choices t[hey] offered as because they were con[ser]vative. Similarly, it is probable [that] Ralph Nader's 2000 election retu[rns] would have been vastly higher [had] he not been kept out of the pr[esi]dential debates and had the pu[blic] been able to regard his candidacy [as] viable. After all, people make de[ci]

ns based on what they believe to genuine options.

Progressives need a consistent eans of access to the majority, so at opportunities such as Michael oore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, in which ogressives can communicate with a tical mass, can no longer be deibed as anomalies.

*ris Ronk*
ew York City

I was shocked that nowhere in ur otherwise enlightening forum is Howard Dean's candidacy menoned, nor was the organization, mocracyforAmerica.com, that was t in its wake.

Dean's candidacy was nothing if not social movement in its own right, nded and energized by half a million ters to which the Democratic Party es its newfound backbone. Concting Americans by that radical new litical tool called the Internet, Dean lved the finance problem and the mmunication problem, and he inired people from coast to coast with aight talk that challenged the Demratic Party to distinguish itself from evil twin. He was strong, where Ker is weak, on the one issue the forum's nelists agreed could speak to a large rt of the electorate: the war in Iraq.

DemocracyforAmerica.com continues where Dean left off, by getting ople involved in the political ocess, encouraging and supporting ogressive candidates, and organizg protests and voter registration llies, all things the panelists identid as being key to the Democratic rty's potency.

*erren Suydam*
hatham, N.J.

Eric Foner's statement that "if you n change the nature of the public scourse, then the politics will folw" is valid, but, historically, disourse engendered by movements ce civil rights, labor, and women's ffrage has precipitated political ifts only to have those shifts flatn over time. They do not represent ogressive permanency.

Consistency in changing public scourse demands strengthening the building blocks of discourse through human consciousness, where the natural laws that empower progress reside. When the American collective consciousness is strengthened through an alignment with natural law, progressive politics will follow.

*H. Foster-Grimmett*
Toronto

As the forum's participants suggest, the progressives' challenge is to find a message that not only resonates with the left but also attracts the independents and the apathetic. For this campaign season, vice presidential candidate John Edwards seems to have already conveyed that message in his "Two Americas" speech. It is simple and convincing. Let's go with it!

*Frank N. Egerton*
Racine, Wis.

## In Memoriam

Like most, I shed a great many tears on September 11, 2001, but I had shed none since. The ghastly parade of horrors and inanities that commenced on that day left me numb and cold. It came as a surprise, not only to my fellow passengers but to me, then, when on the bus to work, midway through Peter Turnley's photo essay ["The Bereaved," August] I broke down sobbing.

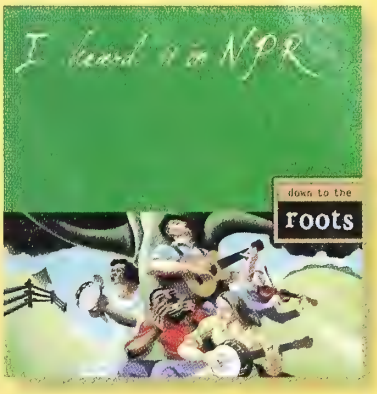
Thank you for using your magazine to express what words cannot.

*David Roberts*
Seattle

## Correction

The film "The Battle for Avery Mann (An Ethics Conflict)" was not made by CACI Productions, Inc., as stated in the introduction to "Company Mann" [Readings, July]. Furthermore, according to General Antonio Taguba's report, only one CACI International, Inc. employee was involved in abuses at Abu Ghraib. The report misidentifies one other private investigator, John Israel, as a CACI International, Inc. employee. Israel has never been employed by CACI International, Inc. We regret the errors.


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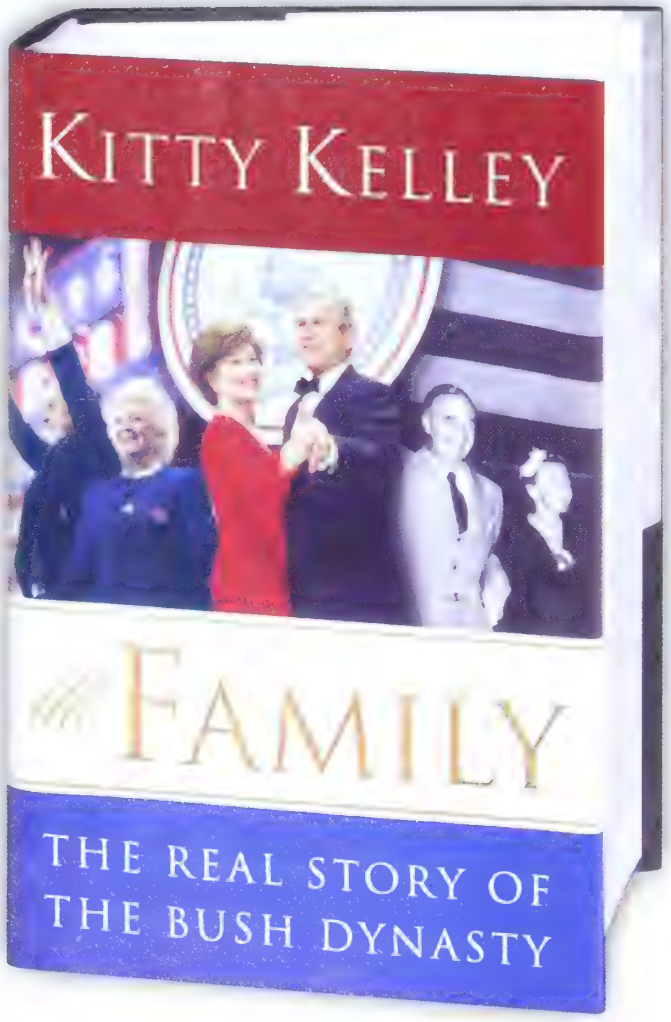
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# NOTEBOOK

## Crowd control

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*function of free speech under our system of government is to invite dispute. It ay indeed best serve its high purposes hen it induces a condition of unrest, eates dissatisfaction with conditions as ey are, or even stirs people to anger.*

—Justice William O. Douglas

Not mincing the words in its title, The Assault on Free Speech, Public ssembly, and Dissent," the National awyers Guild last August published a eport describing the coercive meth-ds—rapidly multiplying and increas-igly sophisticated—employed by the ountry's law-enforcement agencies to uiet the noise and, by so doing, sap the rengths of the American democracy. he evidence gathered from witnesses Boston, Albuquerque, New York, ortland, Washington, and Miami eaks to the pathology of a govern-ent so frightened of its own citizens at it regards them as probable ene-ies. Whether elected to Congress or ppointed by the news media, invest-d with the powers of a trial judge or a olice sergeant, the wisdoms in office nd the practice of democratic self-overnment obnoxious, tiresome, in-fficient, loud, disrespectful, and un-afe. Let too many freedoms roam round loose in the streets, and who nows if or when they might ring off ey, or whether somebody might turn p with an improvised explosive de-ice or a copy of the Constitution.

The report takes as its cases in point xteen large-scale street demonstra-ons organized over the last five years protest—i.e., to question, oppose, isagree, or quarrel with—a judgment, olicy, decree, or act of government. lost of the demonstrations voiced ob-ction to the invasion of Iraq—those in Washington, D.C. (September 2002), New York City (February 2003), Albuquerque, New Mexico (March 2003), again in Washington (April 2003); several others sought more enlightened debate on the topics of the environment and foreign trade, chief among them those staged at the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization in November 1999, in Washington at the meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in April 2000 and September 2002, at the New York meeting of the World Economic Forum in February 2002, and at the Miami conference on the Free Trade Area of the Americas in November 2003. No matter what the venue or the subject in dispute, the evidence invariably shows the civil authorities adapting to a domestic purpose the same military rules of engagement—preemptive strike, forward deterrence, anticipatory self-defense—that distinguish the Bush Administration's never-ending war on foreign terrorists. No breaking through the rope-lines of consensus, every citizen assumed guilty until proven innocent, unlicensed forms of speech deemed unpatriotic and disloyal, the protections of the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Fourteenth amendments declared inoperative or canceled because of rain.

Careful to avoid inflammatory rhetoric, the report contents itself with plain statements of fact, presenting a catalogue of the new and improved means of crowd control that classify the freedoms of expression as a criminal offense. To the following brief summary of the text I've appended, in parentheses, the number of the Constitutional Amendment that each tactic vitiates or ignores:

*Police infiltration and surveillance (I, IV, and XIV):*

As amended in May 2002, the Justice Department's Guidelines on General Crimes, Racketeering Enterprise, and Terrorism Enterprise Investigations permits the FBI to engage in domestic espionage. At or about the same time the Department of Homeland Security issued an all-points bulletin advising the nation's law-enforcement agencies to keep a sharp watch for any citizens who might have "expressed dislike of attitudes and decisions of the U.S. government." Both sets of instruction encouraged more frequent investigations of known or suspected activists, if for no other reason than to furnish such people with the embarrassment of an arrest record and to induce among them a paranoid trembling of mind sufficient to render them stupid as well as futile.

The intimidations take multiple forms—reminders that any withholding of information can be punished as a crime, an impromptu search of an attic or a garage, casual mention of an email sent by the person under investigation to a friend in Paris or Islamabad. During the months prior to last summer's political conventions, FBI counterterrorism agents asked scores of people everywhere in the country whether they had any plans to travel to New York or Boston, and, if so, whether they intended to bring guns and/or seditious thoughts.

When conducting less forthright inspections of the citizenry, undercover FBI agents and police spies join protest movements to collect names and addresses, whenever possible to take photographs and make tape recordings; while participating in a demonstration or a march they sometimes act as *agents*

*provocateurs*, shouting obscenities, breaking windows, causing enough of a disturbance to provoke a violent response from the uniformed police.

*Rush tactics (I, IV, and XIV):*

When police officers assault otherwise peaceable demonstrators without reasonable suspicion or probable cause, for no reason other than to instill the habit of obedience and preach the lesson of fear. Frequently enhanced by the technique of riding into a defenseless crowd on horses or motorcycles.

Helicopters hovered over the heads of a crowd gathered nearby the building in which the Democratic National Convention was being held in Los Angeles in the summer of 2000; the noise of the rotors made it impossible to hear the unauthorized speeches.

*Pre-event searches and raids (I, IV, and XIV)*

Preemptive strikes meant to reduce the size, force, and effect of a demonstration before it takes place. On the night preceding the Washington protest against the policies of the World Bank/IMF, city police raided an assembly point on Florida Avenue. Supposedly responding to a complaint about zoning and fire-code violations, they confiscated the next day's handbills and parade puppets.

*Denying of permits (I and XIV).*

Although the denials frequently have to do with the applicant's political views or manner of dress, the stated reasons refer to the obstruction of traffic or the protection of the environment. When an activist organization sought permission to demonstrate on the Great Lawn in New York's Central Park last summer during the Republican National Convention, the municipal authorities refused the request on the grounds that a large crowd would harm the grass.

*Paying for permits (I and XIV)*

Fees assessed by various municipalities for the privilege of staging a demonstration, sometimes accompanied by requirements that the protesters buy expensive liability insurance and defray the cost of any subsequent property damage.

*Pre-event mass arrests and detentions (I, IV, VI, and XIV)*

On April 15, 2000, in Washington, D.C., the evening prior to the World Bank/IMF protest, the police herded a crowd of people into a containment pen and then arrested more than 600 of them for no lawful reason. A fair number of the arrestees were confined in police buses for as long as eighteen hours without food, water, access to a telephone, a lawyer, or a toilet.

*Preventive mass false arrests and detention (I, IV, and XIV):*

Another form of arrest without probable cause, but imposed during the protest instead of as a preliminary precaution. In Washington on September 27, 2002, the police arrested 400 people in Pershing Park for "failure to obey" an unspecified order that was never given. Restrained in "flexicuffs" that tethered one wrist to the opposite ankle, the detainees could neither stand up nor lie prone.

*Screening checkpoints (I, IV, and XIV):*

All bags become subject to search; large banners and signs must be given up to forestall their translation into weaponry. The more checkpoints that can be set up for no apparent reason, the more likely that the repeated demands for personal identification will promote the attitudes of boredom as well as fear, thus depressing the levels of enthusiasm and attendance.

*Free-speech zones (I and XIV).*

Cages or fenced-off spaces in which citizens remain free to voice objections or display signs critical of a government official or policy. Anybody who expresses a contrary or insulting opinion beyond the designated perimeter is subject to arrest on charges of "disorderly conduct."

Whenever President Bush travels around the country to praise the freedoms for which America presumably is famous, the Secret Service sends advance scouts to set up the protest pens at a sufficient distance from the presidential speech or motorcade to preclude the possibility of the disturbance being seen or heard. At a Labor Day event in Pittsburgh in 2002, a retired steel worker was arrested for walking around outside the free-speech zone with a sign w ing, "The Bush Family Must Su Love the Poor, They Made So M of Us." So also a man in Colum South Carolina, that same ye found in the wrong place with a g saying, "No War for Oil."

Prior to the Democratic Natio Convention last July in Boston, h National Lawyers Guild filed sui guing that the free speech zon wire cage draped in black mesh re sembled "an internment camp." presiding judge agreed that couldn't conceive of a space was "more of an affront to the of free expression," but, fearing the safety of the convention d gates, he declined to shift or enla the venue.

*Snatch squads (I, IV, and XIV):*

Also known as "extraction tea Small bands of police, often wea ski masks and full-body armor, t seize protesters chosen at random, h tle them into vans, and so disap them from the next day's newsp and television coverage. Among other protesters present on the s walk or the street the sight of companions being beaten with c and abruptly carried off to points known serves as an inducemen proceed quietly and in good orde the next bus out of town.

*Less-lethal weapons (I, IV, and XIV*

Applications of excessive force modern technology makes avail to the science of persuasion. Am the most useful—tasers (stun guns capable of delivering 50,000 tempor ly disabling volts of electricity), be bag rounds (fired from twelve-ga shotguns, effective at a range of s feet), concussion grenades.

*Indications of criminal activity or inter and XIV):*

Almost anything that come an arresting officer's mind. In O ber, 2003, some days prior to antiwar demonstrations schedu for the following month in Wa ington and San Francisco, the sent a memorandum to 15,000 l law-enforcement agencies citing examples of potential criminal tivity the use of tape recorders

leo cameras as well as the wearing sunglasses or headscarves presumy intended to protect the citizen inst clouds of tear gas or pepper ay. In some jurisdictions cell ones qualify as "instruments of me" and, if it so pleases the arrestg officer, the possession of one nstitutes a misdemeanor.

*imidations by media (I):*

By exaggerating the chance of vioce at all demonstrations of any conuence or size, the authorities seek to luce the number of people likely to end. Thus the mayor of Philadelia prior to the Republican Conntion in July 2000—"we have got ne idiots coming here ... they are go; to get a very ugly response ..."; anipating antiwar demonstrations in fall of 2002, the mayor of Chicainformed the *Chicago Sun-Times* of imminent arrival of "hordes of vint maniacs."

More often than not the authoris can count on the eagerness of the ws media to promote the rumors of archists breaking into department res. *New York* magazine last May ssed up its preliminary coverage of Republican Convention with deiptions of the incoming protesters as Bush-hating nation of freaks, flashbbers ... wannabe revolutionaries" tain to run amok around "vehicle eckpoints . . . manned with heavy apons, dogs...." Two months clos to the dreadful days in question, the *w York Daily News* devoted its front ge to the message that "Cops Fear rd-Core Lunatics Plotting Conntion Chaos," the prediction backed on page 6 with an announcement m Police Commissioner Raymond lly to the effect that the lunatics ave increased their level of violence" d "are looking to take us on." By time the delegates presented their dentials in late August the city had sed a regiment of 10,000 police ofers, many of them armed with maine guns, to defend it against forn bombs and domestic speeches.

If the demonstration proves to be her orderly or of a large enough nension to lend force and point to subversive sentiment, the news dia take little notice of the event; story shifts to an inside page, the appearance of the crowd reported as old, tired, meager, irrelevant, and small.

Even in the best of times the dissenting voice doesn't attract a popular following, rarely walks on stage to the sound of warm and welcoming applause. In times of trouble the expression of contrary or unorthodox opinion comes to be confused with treason, and as a stop in the mouth of a possibly quarrelsome electorate, nothing works as well as the lollipop of a foreign war. The dodge is as old as chariots in Egypt, but ever since the September 11 attack on New York and Washington, the Bush Administration has had little else with which to demonstrate either the goodness of its heart or the worth of its existence. Let too many citizens begin to ask impertinent questions about the shambles of the federal budget or the ill-conceived occupation of Iraq, and the government sends another spokesperson to a microphone with another story about a missing nuclear bomb or a newly discovered nerve gas. Sometimes it's the director of the FBI, sometimes an unnamed source in the CIA, but always it's the same message—suspect your neighbor and watch the sky, say nothing that cannot be safely overheard, buy duct tape.

The instruction receives a high approval rating because it conforms to the character of a society badly crippled by the fear of nearly everything for which it can find an ominous number or a foreign name. Surrounding ourselves with surveillance cameras and security checkpoints, we learn to proceed on the assumption that everybody is guilty of something—if not plotting the murder of the American Olympic team then cheating the insurance or credit-card company, lying to both the doctor and the lawyer, carrying concealed weapons or emotions. The drug companies decorate our television screens with advertisements for miraculous cures of unspecified diseases; when stopping a suburban station wagon for a minor traffic violation, the arresting officers approach with their hands on their guns, as if expecting to find somewhere in the tangle of surfboards and tennis rackets a contraband Arab or a hidden kitchen knife.

When demanding a thumbprint or a urine sample, the agents of government ask the citizenry for its trust and respect, but who in his or her right mind can trust or respect nervous bullies who make arbitrary arrests and choose to look upon the American people as probable enemies deserving of suspicion and contempt? The authorities defeat what they say is their purpose; presenting a deal similar to the one offered the luckless peasants in Vietnam (i.e., to save the village by destroying it), they suggest that we preserve our liberties by placing them in administrative detention—temporarily, of course, for our own good, and in our own best interests. But the government doesn't lightly relinquish the spoils of power seized under the pretext of apocalypse; what the government grasps the government seeks to keep and hold, and so forgets that the health and well-being of the American democracy depends less on the swagger of its police forces than on the capacity of its individual citizens to muster the strength of their own thought. We can't know what we're about, or whether we're telling ourselves too many lies, unless we can see and hear one another think out loud. Democracy is by definition a work in progress, a never-ending argument predicated on James Madison's notion that whereas "in Europe charters of liberty have been granted by power," America has set the example of "charters of power granted by liberty."

If we mean to continue setting that example, we cannot expect the wisdoms currently in office to do the work on their own initiative. The report published by the National Lawyers Guild is very clear on the point. The country's law-enforcement agencies (federal, state, county, and city) routinely break the law, routinely mock, disregard, and trespass against both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, but the Justice Department as administered by Attorney General John Ashcroft makes little or no attempt to restrain or discourage, much less prosecute, the crimes committed in the name of "the national security." Unless we find a jurisdiction in which to do so—and with it the courage to indict and punish rather than to regret and deplore—the country stands to lose the constitutional right to its own name. ■

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# HARPER'S INDEX

ays since the U.S. government first placed the nation under an "elevated terror alert" that the level has been relaxed : 0

Years of "elevated" or "high" terror alerts since then : 2

Aid that U.S. leaflets dropped on Fallujah in July threatened to freeze if insurgent attacks continued : $102,000,000

Number of insurgent attacks in Fallujah in the week before and after the leafletting, respectively : 21, 36

mpensation the U.S. government has paid Iraqis for wrongful deaths, injuries, and property damage since 2002 : $4,475,643

Total "death gratuities" the U.S. government has paid since then to survivors of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq : $11,436,000

otal amount Ohio's crime-victims compensation fund has paid the survivors of one U.S. soldier killed in Iraq : $5,656.77

ximum percentage income- and corporate-tax rate under laws made for Iraqis by the Coalition Provisional Authority : 15

ys a House committee postponed July hearings on antidepressants while its chair considered a pharmaceutical-lobbyist job : 50

Number of the 5 Republicans investigating Rep. Tom DeLay on ethics charges who have taken donations from his PAC : 4

Number of Ohio election boards being sued over erroneously informing parolees that they may not vote : 21

Number of banks robbed in Davenport, Iowa, while John Kerry and George Bush gave speeches there on August 4 : 3

timated number of right-wing Jewish extremists Israel monitors as potential threats to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon : 300

Years after leaving his post during the Vietnam War that a Connecticut man was arrested for desertion in July : 34

Minimum number of Guantánamo detainees who boycotted their military tribunals in August : 13

Average number of kidnappings per week in Iraq since March : 5

Number of non-Iraqis detained there by U.S. forces in the last year : 400

tio of the minimum number of beheadings by the Saudi government last year to those by Saudi terrorists so far this year : 50:1

Date on which Turkmenistan added questions on the president's spiritual writings to its driver's-license test : 6/12/04

Percentage of Mississippians who have failed their written driver's-license test since it became computerized last year : 60

Chance that a new light vehicle bought in the United States last year was a truck or SUV : 1 in 2

Minimum number of U.S. children killed since 1998 as a result of heat stroke after being left locked in cars : 219

Rank of last year among those in which the largest number of children died this way : 1

Square miles of surface areas between Canada and Mexico that are impervious to water : 112,610

Square miles of wetlands : 98,460

Rank of this year's desert-locust plague in northern Africa among the world's worst in 15 years : 1

Number of countries susceptible to such a plague : 65

Chance that a southern Sudanese woman will die in childbirth : 1 in 9

Chance that a southern Sudanese girl will complete primary school : 1 in 100

Projected lifespan in years of a Zimbabwean born in 1989 and one born in 2002, respectively : 60, 34

Number of its international workers that Doctors Without Borders has lost to political violence in its 34-year history : 8

Number of them killed in Afghanistan in June : 3

Number of American states in which one may legally shoot fish with a semi-automatic rifle : 2

Record number of skips achieved by a stone skipper : 40

conds by which this year's winner of the men's Olympic 400-meter dash was faster than the winner of the women's : 5.81

Seconds difference in 1972 : 6.42

tor by which the number of U.S. girls under 19 who got breast implants last year exceeded the number who did in 2002 : 3

ce a haunted-house supplier charges for a male figure "being tortured like never before," flesh-ripping sounds included : $2,295

Estimated price a British cable company will charge for a kit to track "evidence of the paranormal" via the Internet : £150

*Figures are the latest available as of August 2004. Sources are listed on page 102.*
*"Harper's Index" is a registered trademark.*

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# READINGS

[Essay]

## OUR PRESENT DISILLUSIONMENT

*From "In Our Present-Day White Christian Culture," by Jacqueline Rose, published in the July 8 issue of the* London Review of Books. *Rose teaches English at the University of London, and has written the introduction to a new translation of Freud's* Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, *to be published in the U.K. in December by Penguin.*

Ever since the fall of Baghdad, when looters rampaged through the city, a centuries-old assumption about "the people" has lurked, barely spoken, beneath the ghastly aftermath of the war. It is that the people, meaning "people en masse," are incapable of restraining themselves. In the case of Iraq, two further assumptions are in play. First, people freed from the yoke of oppressive dictatorship are most at risk: the excesses of the Iraqi populace are laid at the door of Saddam Hussein at the very moment he loses his power to control them, and not, for example, seen as the responsibility of the occupying armies. Second, the Iraqi people are especially prone to such behavior because they fall outside the civilizing processes of the West. Thus beneath Donald Rumsfeld's magnificently evasive "Stuff happens"—a formula that allows us to think that such things might happen to anyone, including, presumably, us, or even him—we glimpse a much harsher, more discriminatory form of judgment. Between dictatorship and barbarity, Iraq stands condemned: one reason, no doubt, democracy has to be imported and cannot be entrusted to the Iraqis themselves, even while the images from Abu Ghraib suggest that there is no foundation for such self-serving discriminations between us and them.

In *Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,* Freud discussed the "masses," shockingly, in terms of the church and the army, where the most passionate, not to say sacred, group identifications are formed. Freud's term is "*die Massen,*" but a translation more faithful to its spirit than "the masses" might be "collectivity," since Freud's question is what makes individuals bind themselves into groups. But "collectivity" sidesteps the problem, since it avoids the awkward, but politically suggestive, blurring of boundaries between masses and groups. Or, say, between looters and the army. Or between Iraqis running wild in the street and American and British soldiers in Baghdad jails obeying vicious orders from their superiors.

"We don't feel like we were doing things we weren't supposed to, because we were told to do them," Pfc. Lynndie England says. The fact that such orders can be traced back through the highest chain of command will not stop her from becoming a scapegoat in the United States and Britain alike. The violations, however, are not those of one or two individuals whom it is easy to hate but of a group—a group moreover that is meant to embody our national pride. At moments it has felt as if exposing this reality, rather than the reality itself, were the

worst offense. Lynndie England and her partners in crime will be despised less for the appalling things they have done than for shattering the complacency of Western values, for letting the world see. The lone criminal can be distanced but not the policies of a government that, democratically elected, represents each and every one of us. We cannot palm our misdeeds off on a dictator.

The people can be cruel, our institutions vicious. Knowing this, however, may not in the long term make any difference. It might even make matters worse. According to Freud, it is when people's self-love is threatened that they resort to extremes. Far from being humbled, they tend to lash out in narcissistic self-defense. We are in a vicious circle if it is true that there are no limits to what people will do to hold on to their belief in themselves.

It isn't a coincidence that Freud's first extensive analysis of people en masse came after his study of narcissism, which had obliged him to revise completely his model of the mind. His early distinction between love and hunger, between the drives of desire and those of self-preservation, broke down when he realized that people can be their own preferred object. A group is nothing if not the struggle to preserve its ideal image of itself. This is not an "ideal" in the sense of the ideal of democracy invoked so often in justification of an illegal war, the sort of ideal that is set before us as something to which we, and the world, can aspire. After Freud, things are more complicated, in that such apparently unobjectionable ideals can be seen as cover for something far less disinterested. What if, in struggling, say, to "impose democracy," we are in fact merely servicing an ideal version of ourselves?

Freud developed this analysis of narcissism at the outbreak of the First World War in "The Disillusionment of the War," the first essay in *Thoughts for the Time on War and Death*. What was being shattered by the war, along with the lives of the people it trampled, was the self-idealization of the West. Freud was not talking about the preemptive warfare of America's New Century against the countries of the East, but his idea of what war should be like—a belief falling to pieces as he wrote—bears repeating. "We saw [such a war]," Freud writes, "as an opportunity for demonstrating the progress of comity among men since the era when the Greek Amphictyonic Council proclaimed that no city of the league might be destroyed, nor its olive groves cut down, nor its water supply stopped. . . . There would of course," he continues, "be the utmost consideration for the non-combatant classes of the population. . . . And again, all the international undertakings and institutions in which the common civilization of peacetime had been embodied would be maintained." Such a war would have produced "horror and suffering" enough, he recognizes, "but it would not have interrupted the development of ethical relations

[Endowment]

## THE BODY POLITIC

*From a January 24 resolution passed unanimously by the town council of Mulazzo, in northern Tuscany. The resolution was proposed by the town's mayor, Sandro Donati. Translated from the Italian by Marilyn Krieger.*

WHEREAS physical appearance, attitude, and behavior are of fundamental importance, not only in and of themselves but also in the context of the interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships that the governing majority must undertake in providing synergetic assistance toward the pursuit of the objectives established in the platform, not to mention those of the minority opposition with regard to, among other things, providing critical stimulus toward the constructive improvement of those objectives;

IN the conviction that caring for one's image, including one's physical appearance, contributes significantly to the acquisition and maintenance of self-esteem, and is indispensable in ensuring the confidence and the determination necessary to achieve previously established goals;

IN order that all administrators be in a position to best conduct their institutional functions by enabling them to optimize their exterior, expressive capabilities, which condition the psycho- and sociological aspects of relationships;

IN recognition that this may be understood as a function of political representation, insofar as it is directed toward the improvement, broadly speaking, of social and administrative relations that may herald positive economic repercussions for the community;

The Town Council unanimously resolves:

TO support choices that council members may make by paying a subsidy, to be decided upon after a precise verification of available funds, to be counted toward the partial compensation of the expenses for cosmetic surgery aimed at the optimization of the image factor.



Graphic Chemicals, *an etching with watercolor by Dasha Shishkin, was included in "The Day After I Destroyed the Women, I Wished I Had Not Destroyed Them," a group show that took place last summer at Oliver Kamm 5BE Gallery, in New York City.*

between the collective individuals of mankind—the peoples and states."

In a strange way, warfare is the deadly repository of our most tenacious and precarious self-idealization. Because it is so ugly it must be good: civilized in its conduct and civilized in its aims. In psychoanalytic terms, you might say that narcissists are so frantic and demanding because of the extent of the internal damage they are battling to repair. Paradoxically, it is because war is so awful that we invest with such ferocity in the belief that it can be the bearer of civilization to all peoples. Freud's bruising catalogue of the reality of the war in which such hope had been so naively invested is worth quoting at length:

> Then the war in which we had refused to believe broke out, and it brought—disillusionment. . . . It disregards all the restrictions known as International Law, which in peacetime the states had bound themselves to observe; it ignores the prerogative of the wounded and the medical service, the distinction between the civil and military sections of the population. . . . It tramples on all that comes its way as if there were to be no future. . . . It cuts all the common bonds between the contending peoples and threatens to leave a legacy of embitterment that will make any renewal of those bonds impossible for a long time to come.

Even more important perhaps is what such conduct does, then and now, to the relationship between the citizen and the state. It is precisely because the state is the representative of the people, precisely because we are a democracy, that our present disillusionment is so intense. What is falling apart is the belief in the virtue of representative institutions. It is starting to cross the minds of the citizens that states, even democratic states, might embody the very evils they use to justify wars against other—totalitarian or what today are called "rogue" or "failed"—states. Today the citizen is again faced with the dawning recognition—the "horror," to use Freud's term—that "the state has forbidden to the individual the practice of wrongdoing, not because it desires to abolish it, but because it desires to monopolize it, like salt and tobacco." (Freud uses the same word, "*der Schrecken*," "horror" or

"terror," to describe both war and the people's loss of trust. A belligerent state not only [illegible] in relation to the enemy; it also violates the principles that should hold between itself and its citizens. "A belligerent state," Freud writes, "permits itself every such misdeed, every act of violence as would disgrace the individual." No surprise, then, that faced with the disclosure of such misdeeds as those at Abu Ghraib, the state will rush to return them to the citizen's records as "individual disgrace." Furthermore, the state uses secrecy and censorship to rob its citizens of the critical defenses they might need in order to deal with the reality of war. Truth, we have so often been told, is the first casualty of war. We tend to understand this as referring simply to censorship, but Freud is making another point. Numbing its citizens' capacity for judgment is one of the chief war aims of the modern state.

Of course we can understand these ideas at least in part as Freud's disillusionment at finding his own nation on the wrong side of the First World War: "We live in hopes that the pages of an impartial history will prove that that nation, in whose language we write and for whose victory our dear ones are fighting, has been precisely the one which has least transgressed the laws of civilization. . . . But at such a time, who dares to set himself up as judge in his own cause?" Inside this lament is one of his fiercest defenses of the people against the democratic state's monopoly of violence. It isn't just that the state demands of its citizens a form of virtue from which it so blatantly abstains itself; or that it suppresses the critical faculties of the people at a time when they are more in need of the freedom to exercise them than ever; or that it has broken a bond of trust between itself and its citizens at a time when, in the name of patriotism, it is demanding ever more sacrifices. All this is bad enough. Worse however, like insane parents who insist they are being cruel to be kind, the state insists that its worst belligerence is a virtue.

The greatest sacrifice the people are being asked to make on behalf of the state is to give up their right not to believe in it. If there is one thing worse than disillusionment, it is not being allowed to recognize that you are disillusioned. There is a lie at the heart of democracy if the state will sacrifice its citizens' freedom to dissent, and indeed its relationship to them, for the sake of its own violently enacted and no less violently preserved self-regard. Tony Blair's increasingly desperate statements of conviction are simply an inflated example of the trend. "I believe in myself" is the last great performative statement of an idealist on the rocks. It also exposes the lie stated, believing in himself himself alone, he clearly neither believes in nor belongs to the people. Righteousness is, then, a flag of honor that leads a nation to war. [illegible] we have been told, as though it should make us feel better, that what was done in Abu Ghraib is nothing compared with the executions and tortures of Saddam Hussein. As Ahdaf Soueif put it in a recent article in the *Guardian:* "Hussein is now the moral compass of the West."

Humiliation is a central component of torture in Abu Ghraib, as many commentators have pointed out, the humiliation is targeted deliberately at Muslim sensibilities about sexual decorum and pride. Behind the humiliation lies a carefully thought-out policy of psychic abuse. "The purpose of all coercive techniques," states the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* produced by the CIA for Honduras in 1983, "is to induce psychological regression. . . . Regression is basically a loss of autonomy." The manual is an updated version of the *Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual* of 1963, according to which such regression has to be traumatically induced: "There is an interval . . . of suspended animation, a kind of psychological shock or paralysis. It is caused by a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience which explodes, as it were, the world that is familiar to the subject as well as his image of himself within that world. . . . At this moment the source is far more open to suggestion, far likelier to comply."

This is almost exactly the scenario laid out by the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas in his 1995 article "The Structure of Evil," which describes the "psychic death" or "radical infantilization" that the serial killer imposes on his victim: "With the total collapse of trust and the madness expressed by sudden dementia of the real, the victim experiences an annihilation of adult personality structures and is time-warped into a certain kind of infantile position, possibly depending now for existence itself on the whim of incarcerated madness." Incarcerated madness will do nicely for Abu Ghraib. Crucial in both cases is that the subject is made to regress to a state of childlike dependency, at the same time losing all the reference points that would allow him to find himself even in this regressed, infantile world. The key, as the CIA manual puts it, is "loss of autonomy." Far from raising the world to heights of civilization, the ruling powers of the new century seem to be spending a lot of energy trying to turn both citizens and enemies into children.

Freud was not always generous toward the people. He was a snob. "The people," he writes to his fiancée, Martha Bernays, in August 1883, "judge, think, love and work in a manner utter-

# Most Americans Want Immigration Drastically Reduced



## Tens of Millions are determined to come here – legally or illegally.

Two out of three Americans think overall immigration should be cut to less than half the current level of 1.5 million a year, according to a March 2003 poll taken by RoperASW for Negative Population Growth, Inc.

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[Nomenclature]

## WHO'S UU

*From a list of historical clans compiled by the head of the Mongolian State Library to assist Mongolians in choosing clan names. In the 1920s the Communist government eliminated clan names in a campaign to destroy the country's hereditary aristocracy and class structure. As the population grew and became more urban, however, the one-name system led to confusion and inadvertent intermarrying, and currently all Mongolians are required to register clan names. Translated from the Khalkha Mongolian by Andrew Shimunek.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Argalchin | collectors of dried dung |
| Ayagachin | those who make cups and bowls |
| Baast | poopy, fecal |
| Baga dogshin | the lesser ruthless ones |
| Bagtaamal | the included ones |
| Bayajikh | those who are getting rich |
| Böösniikhön | the descendants of lice |
| Chiwchin | those who neuter bulls |
| Dairtan | those with saddle sores |
| Duutan | the vociferous ones |
| Emgenüüd | the old ladies |
| Galzuud | the insane ones |
| Güjir | the stubborn ones |
| Günger | those who mumble |
| Khachid | the weird ones |
| Kholidog | those who always mix |
| Khorkhoi nüdten | those with bug eyes |
| Khunbish | the not humans |
| Khurlagad | those whose animals grow fat later than others |
| Lalaryn guchid | the great-great-grandchildren of the one-eyed ogre |
| Mogoi nüdten | those with snake eyes |
| Nütsged | the naked ones |
| Ondögiinkhön | those of the egg |
| Sawsag doloon | the wanton seven |
| Shaawai | the well-dressed ones |
| Showkhnar | the coneheads |
| Shüdgüi | the toothless ones |
| Solgoi | the left-handed ones |
| Takhiankhan | those of the chicken |
| Tongoruud | the upside-down ones |
| Tursaga | the skins of animals that have starved to death |
| Ukhaamuud | the intelligent ones |
| Ulaan yamaat | those having red goats |
| Uu | drink! |
| Zalkhuus | the lazy ones |
| Zazgar | those with small, hairy bodies |

ly different from ourselves." In a letter to her sister, written two years later, in 1885, after he had spent time wandering the streets of Paris, he describes them as a "different species, 'uncanny.'" "I feel they are all possessed of a thousand demons," Freud continues. "I don't think they know the meaning of shame or fear; the women no less than the men crowd round nudities as much as they do round corpses in the morgue." Freud thus handed to the people the aberrations of sexuality that it would take him another twenty years to theorize as the unconscious property of us all. But even as he takes his distance he recognizes that the people have access to a truth about the civilization from which he excludes them. "The people" are "utterly different" not due to some inherent failing of their nature but because they are so beset. The "poor people," who become just "the poor," are "too helpless, too exposed to behave like us"; in their "lack of moderation" they are compensating for being "a helpless target for all the taxes, epidemics, sicknesses and evils of social institutions." They have no moderation because they have no illusions to maintain—in this they are way ahead of the disillusioned citizens of war-torn Europe in 1914. Why on earth should the people believe in the benign power of social institutions?

By 1927, Freud's early recognition that the poor are the bearers of the "evils of social institutions" has become even more political and precise:

> If a culture has not got beyond the point where the satisfaction of some participants requires the oppression of others, maybe the majority (and this is the case with all contemporary cultures), then, understandably, the oppressed will develop a deep hostility towards a culture that their labor makes possible but in whose commodities they have too small a share. . . . It goes without saying that a culture that fails to satisfy so many of its participants, driving them to rebellion, has no chance of lasting for any length of time, nor does it deserve [to].

The people expose the evils of social institutions, the injustices of culture (what Freud refers to elsewhere as "our present-day white Christian culture"). In doing so, they reveal unconscious desires that, however shameless (indeed because they are so shameless), implicate every one of us. In *Mass Psychology*, he describes the masses as laying bare "the unconscious foundation that is the same for everyone." Go back to the letter of 1885: "The women no less than the men crowd round nudities as much as they do round corpses in the morgue." Suddenly this brings to mind the images of grinning soldiers crowding round the abject inmates of Abu Ghraib. These images are pornographic, as many have pointed out,



*"Drawing VIII," a photograph by Noelle Tan, will be on display in November at the School 33 Art Center, in Baltimore.*

but in a very specific form. They trade on the unconscious association of sex and death. You don't have to accept Freud's vision of the mob, burdened as it is with all the stereotypes of bourgeois fear, to notice that he has run a line from perversion to truth. Civilization is unjust; our most venerated social institutions are evil; be wary of pointing the finger at the individual who disgraces us, since we are all of us perverts in our dreams.

"Well may the citizen of the world stand helpless in a world that has grown strange to him," Freud writes in "The Disillusionment of the War." But, he adds, "there is something to be said in criticism of his disappointment: It is not justified, since it consists in the destruction of an illusion." At this unexpected turning point, we discover that what Freud means by "disillusionment" is not quite what we expected. Our mistake, it turns out, was to have believed in the first place. In this context, war, at the very moment when the state is doing its utmost to subdue the critical judgment of citizens, might provide us with a rare opportunity. Like "the people," who of course need no such prompting or crisis, we can now see things, see people, as they really are. "In reality, our fellow citizens have not sunk so low as we feared, because they had never risen as high as we believed." This is not, finally, a narcissistic lament ("How we have fallen" or "This is not the America I know," to cite Bush's more recent phrase); it is at once more modest and more devastating. "White Christian culture" should stop kidding itself.

Much follows from this. There is no such thing, Freud states, as "eradicating" evil. The impulses that constitute the "deepest essence" of human nature are "neither good nor bad" in themselves. He will condemn actions but never the drives from which they stem. It is a central tenet of psychoanalysis that if we can tolerate what is most disorientating—disillusioning—about our own unconscious, we will be less likely to act on it, less inclined to strike out in a desperate attempt to assign the horrors of the world to someone or somewhere else. It is not, therefore, the impulse that is dangerous but the ruthlessness of our attempts to be rid of it.

Freud knew that the fierceness with which a group builds and defends its identity was the central question of modern times. But unlike the leaders of our "present-day White Christian culture," he knew that no group is safe from the dangers of conviction, and that a nation that frees itself from doubt and refuses to question its own motives and acts can place the world in peril.

[Travel Guide]

# BLUEBIRDS OVER BAGHDAD

*From "A Short Guide to Iraq," published by the U.S. government in 1942. The handbook was written for American soldiers who were stationed in Iraq to prevent Nazis from seizing the country's oil.*

You will enter Iraq (i-RAHK) both as a soldier and as an individual, because on our side a man can be both. That is our strength—if we are smart enough to use it. It can be our weakness if we aren't. As a soldier your duties are laid out for you. As an individual, it is what you do on your own that counts—and it may count for a lot more than you think.

American success or failure in Iraq may well depend on whether the Iraqis (as the people are called) like American soldiers or not. It may not be quite that simple. But then again it could.

One of your big jobs is to prevent Hitler's agents from getting in to do their dirty work. The best way you can do this is by getting along with the Iraqis, and the best way to get along with any people is to understand them. That is what this guide is for. And, secondly, so that you as a human being will get the most out of an experience few Americans have been lucky enough to have. Years from now you'll be telling your children and maybe your grandchildren stories beginning, "Now, when I was in Baghdad . . ."

## WHAT IS THIS IRAQ?

What is Iraq, anyhow? Well, it's a lot of things, old and new. In Baghdad, the capital city, you will see street merchants selling exactly the same kind of pottery that their ancestors sold at the time of the Arabian Nights. Not far away you will see great dams and modern refineries equal to the best you have seen in America.

Iraq is hot! Probably you will feel Iraq first—and that means heat. Blazing heat. And dust. Or the first thing you notice may be the smells. You have heard and read a lot about the "mysterious East." You have seen moving pictures about the colorful life of the desert and the bazaars. When you actually get there you will look in vain for some of the things you have been led to expect. You will smell and feel a lot of things the movies didn't warn you about.

## MEET THE PEOPLE

But don't get discouraged. Most Americans and Europeans who have gone to Iraq didn't like it at first. Might as well be frank about it. But nearly all of these same people changed their minds, largely on account of the Iraqi people they began to meet. So will you.

That tall man in the flowing robe you are going to see soon, with the whiskers and the long hair, is a first-class fighting man, highly skilled in guerrilla warfare. If he is your friend, he can be a staunch and valuable ally. If he should happen to be your enemy—look out! Remember Lawrence of Arabia? Well, it was with men like these that he wrote history in the First World War.

But you will find out that the Iraqi is one of the most cheerful and friendly people in the world. If you are willing to go just a little out of your way to understand him, everything will be okay.

Differences? Sure, there are differences. Differences galore! But what of it? You aren't going to Iraq to change the Iraqis. Just the opposite. We are fighting this war to preserve the principle of "live and let live." Maybe that sounded like a lot of words to you at home. Now you have the chance to prove it to yourself and others. If you can, it's going to be a better world for all of us.

By far the most people you will meet are Moslems. They do not like to have "unbelievers" (to them you are an "unbeliever") come anywhere near their mosques. You can usually tell a mosque by its high tower. If you try to enter one, you will be thrown out, probably with a severe beating. If you have blundered too near a mosque, get away in a hurry before trouble starts.

You probably belong to a church at home, and you know how you would feel toward anyone who insulted or desecrated your church. Their feeling about their religion is pretty much the same as ours toward our religion, though more intense. If anything, we should respect the Moslems the more for the intensity of their devotion.

It is a good idea in any foreign country to avoid any religious or political discussions. This is even truer in Iraq, because it happens that here the Moslems themselves are divided into two factions something like our division into Catholic and Protestant denominations, so don't put in your two cents when Iraqis argue about religion. There are also political differences in Iraq that have puzzled diplomats and statesmen.

Your move is to stay out of political and religious arguments altogether. By getting mixed up in these matters you'll only help the Nazi propagandists who are trying to stir up trouble. If you can win the trust and friendship of all the Iraqis you meet, you will do more than you may think possible to help bring them together in our common cause.

Needless to say, Hitler will try to use the differences between ourselves and Iraqis to make trouble. But we have a weapon to beat that kind of thing. Plain common horse sense. Let's use it. Hitler's game is to divide and conquer. Ours is to unite and win!

[Modus Operandi]

# AFTER THE PARTY

*From a handbook used by members of Super Free, a now defunct club for students at elite Japanese universities. Last spring three club members were convicted of being among thirteen who gang-raped an eighteen-year-old student in a stairwell during a party; the trial revealed that Super Free members routinely organized parties at which they targeted attendees for rape. The three were given jail sentences of twenty-eight to thirty-two months. (In Japan the national minimum for rape is two years; and for robbery, five years.) Between 1995 and 2003, hundreds of women are believed to have been raped by Super Free members. The club's leader, Shinichiro Wada, argued that "gang rape creates solidarity among members." During a parliamentary debate on the matter, Seiichi Ota, a former cabinet minister, said, "At least gang rapists are still vigorous. Isn't that at least a little normal?" Translated from the Japanese by Ryann Connell.*

STEP ONE

Create a fun and wholesome main show. Promise women they can talk to top organization officials to lure them to the after-show party.

STEP TWO

At the after-show party, usually at a bar, decide which women are to be raped. Aim for new students from the countryside who have recently arrived in Tokyo and aren't used to partying. They are likely to be thrilled at the prospect of learning about what's happening at Waseda [a prestigious university]. Look for women who seem ill at ease and timid, and are unlikely to attend future events.

STEP THREE

Under the pretense of playing a game, ply the woman with alcohol. Go in for the kill by giving plastered women drinks spiked with Spirytus [a Polish vodka with a 96 percent alcohol content]. Even if they say they can't drink any more, force them. Soft drinks are not to be served.

STEP FOUR

With the excuse of looking after the drunk woman, move her away from her friends. Only one person should leave with the woman at first, but afterward three to ten people may join them and take part. Whoever gives the woman the drink that put her over the edge earns the right to begin. Set up a lookout and use cell phones to communicate. Take away the woman's shoes, purse, and cell phone so that she cannot get away before we have finished. If her friends are worried and come looking for her, get rid of them by saying that a paramedic is taking care of her. After finishing, make sure everybody has a tight cover story and be sure that all information related to you is deleted from the woman's phone. Take photos or a video of the rape and threaten to expose the woman publicly if she opens her mouth about what happened.

[Guidelines]

# LOOK FOR THE UNION LABEL

*From "Labor Relations and You at the Wal-Mart Distribution Center," prepared by Orson Mason, a branch manager at a Greencastle, Indiana, store. According to the United Food and Commercial Workers, Wal-Mart, the nation's largest private employer, pays its 1.3 million workers an average of $8 an hour, $2.35 less than the average hourly wage of unionized grocery workers.*

Wal-Mart is opposed to unionization of its associates. Any suggestion that the Company is neutral on the subject or that it encourages associates to join labor organizations is not true. As a member of Wal-Mart's management team, you are our first line of defense against unionization. This toolbox will provide you with valuable information on how to remain union-free in the event union organizers choose your facility as their next target.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS:

- Increased curiosity in benefits
- Associates receiving unusual attention from other associates
- Associates talking in hushed tones to each other
- Abuse of rest-room visits
- Associates spending an abnormal amount of time in the parking lot before and after work
- Associates who are never seen together start talking or associating with each other and begin forming strange alliances

TYPES OF ASSOCIATES ATTRACTED TO UNIONS:

Unions have learned to identify certain types of individuals who are more susceptible to union exploitation than others:

1. THE INEFFICIENT ASSOCIATE realizes that he will not be able to measure up to the facility's standards and will be terminated. He is attracted to the union because they convince him that they will clothe him with the so-called shield of "job security."

2. THE REBELLIOUS ASSOCIATE is attracted to

the union cause started because he is opposed to all management or bosses. He consequently becomes an antagonist to the employer and a respondent to the union propaganda.

3. THE SOMETHING-FOR-NOTHING ASSOCIATE is the typical injury-faker who has collected worker's compensation from most of his former employers. He is always looking for a deal. He takes every imaginable shortcut in his job and sincerely feels that the world owes him a living.

4. THE CHRONICALLY DISSATISFIED ASSOCIATE might be one of the most productive associates, but he will find fault with everything. He is a hopeless griper, as distinguished from a constructive critic. He is truly an unhappy individual. He probably was born unhappy, is going to die unhappy, and is going to be unhappy for the duration between.

5. THE CAUSE-ORIENTED ASSOCIATE will "jump" on any bandwagon that passes through his area. He was the same individual who joined all of the "off-beat" organizations in high school or college. He once took a trip to India to visit his personal "guru."

6. THE OVERQUALIFIED ASSOCIATE is out of his element. He might well be a Ph.D. operating a grinding machine or a former accountant sweeping the floor, but his station in life has deteriorated to the point that his vanity suffers. He will attempt to exert influence over his fellow associates in an effort to bolster his deflated ego and will be attracted to the union simply because the union will seem to offer hopes of returning him to his previous station in life.

HOW TO RESPOND TO UNION DEMAND FOR RECOGNITION:

If a union organizer contacts you demanding recognition or seeking to show you authorization cards, DO NOT acknowledge that the union represents a majority of your associates, DO NOT agree to look at any proof of majority support—such as authorization cards or membership applications—DO NOT agree to have a "neutral" party examine the offered proof of majority status.

The proper response when a union organizer seeks recognition is to refer him/her to your Personnel Manager. Refuse to accept any documents from the union. Immediately after any conversation with a union rep, call the Union Hotline at 501-273-8300.

Staying union free is a full-time commitment. Unless union prevention is a goal equal to other objectives within an organization, the goal will usually not be attained. No one in management is immune from carrying his or her "own weight" in the union prevention effort. Unless each member of management is willing to spend the necessary time, effort, energy, and money, the Wal-Mart union-free objective will not be accomplished.

[PARABLE]

# WHERE THE LIBERAL THINGS ARE

*Adapted from* Help! Mom! There Are Liberals Under My Bed! A Small Lesson in Conservatism, *a children's book written by Katharine De-Bracht and published in April by Xulon Press.*

Tommy and Lou were brothers who lived in a small house, on a small street, in a small neighborhood, in a small city, in the great U.S.A. And, like most good boys, they ate their vegetables, did their chores, tried not to fight over their toys, and said their prayers at bedtime.

But Tommy and Lou had a problem. Each day after building sand castles in their small sandbox, they pleaded with their mom and dad for a new swing set. But Mom and Dad always had bills to pay, shoes to buy, and food to put on the table.

"Oh, how I wish we could have a swing set like some other kids," Lou moaned. "It just doesn't seem fair." But his mom smiled and said, "Son, if life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

That gave Tommy an idea. "We'll make lemonade and sell it!" he told Lou. "Then we will have enough money to buy our swing set!"

The boys went on to bed and soon began to dream about their lemonade stand. But a strange thing happened. Their dream got stuck in Liberalland.

The boys worked day and night, trying to get their recipe just right. Their little hands ached, and little Lou even got a blister. But finally, they opened up their stand. And people LOVED Tommy and Lou's lemonade! They lined the streets every day to buy a glass.

"Soon we'll have enough money to buy our swing set!" said Lou. "I almost feel my feet swinging in the breeze!"

"Wait," said Tommy. "Remember how Mom and Dad always tell us to help others? We should save some money for less fortunate kids."

"Yes!" cheered Lou. "Like kids with no shoes."

So each day the boys saved a little extra money for the children with no shoes.

Until one day a liberal appeared from behind their lemon tree. "Hellllloo." The liberal's eyes grew wide as he gazed at the boys' money. "My, my, boys, you sure have sold a lot of lemonade. Have you paid your tax?" His thin lips curled.

"Tax?" Tommy asked. "How much is that?"

"HALF!" the liberal snapped.

"But we give our extra money for the children with no shoes, and we worked so hard," Lou cried. "Look at my blister!"



COURTESY MITCHELL-INNES & NASH, NEW YORK CITY

Untitled (#6), *by Kojo Griffin. Griffin's work is currently on display at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, in New York City.*

"Ah, silly lad. We liberals know what is best for our shoeless children. Besides," the liberal winked, "why work hard when we can provide for you?"

The liberal grabbed half of Tommy and Lou's money. He straightened his silk tie. "Now, I am late for a press conference," and he disappeared behind the tree.

That night the boys heard a familiar voice on TV. "Yes, we liberals know how to take care of our children with no shoes." The liberal's white teeth gleamed. "That is why I have purchased three million dustpans for our shoeless children."

Tommy and Lou felt bad that the shoeless kids would have dustpans instead of shoes, and they hoped their little extra money would help them buy shoes.

Tommy and Lou were thankful for the success of their stand and for the beautiful lemon tree that God had provided them. So atop their stand, they hung a picture of Jesus.

Until one day another liberal appeared from behind their lemon tree. "Boys, that picture MUST come down!" The stout liberal wagged his finger. "You see, Mr. Affluence happens to see this picture while riding in his limousine, and quite frankly, young man, it offends him!"

"But it is my picture of Jesus on our stand." Tommy began to cry.

"Well, I do have something," said the liberal as he reached into a large bag. "Because we liberals are not against free speech." And with that, he hung a picture of a big toe atop their stand.

"A big toe?" Lou winced.

The liberal drummed his fingers on his belly. "According to our polls, a big toe is one of only two things that do not offend anyone." The liberal brushed his coat with his meaty hands. "I must be going, you see, important people, like myself, have important things to do, like be on *Go Greet the Press*." And he disappeared behind the tree.

The boys went on selling lemonade, until one day another liberal appeared from behind their lemon tree. "Now listen here. As I was peeking in the Johnsons' window the other night, I saw Mrs. Johnson NOT making her son, George, eat his vegetables!"

"But I thought George had the flu," said Lou.

"Parents just don't know how to make sure their children eat their vegetables!" He pounded his fist on their stand. "We liberals know how to do it better! So, for every glass of lemonade you sell, you must give two pieces of broccoli with it. Now, I have a fund-raising event in a few minutes," he announced, checking his hair in a glass.

"And by the way," the liberal said, turning back toward the boys, "as of Monday, Senator Kruckle is sponsoring a sugar law—rots kids' teeth, you know, so only one teaspoon of sugar allowed."

So the boys went on selling lemonade with smiles and thank-yous, and saved a little extra money for the children with no shoes, and paid half of their money for the tax, and gave out two pieces of broccoli with each glass that used only

one teaspoon of sugar, like the good little boys they were.

Then one day all the liberals started streaming out from behind the lemon tree with cameras flashing and microphones whirling. A tall liberal pushed his way in front of the microphones. "Twenty-five cents a glass is an outrage! Two million people each day go without lemonade and half of our children are not eating their vegetables!" The liberal glared into the cameras. "It is greed, pure greed."

"But we worked hard for this stand," Tommy cried.

"Today, my proud liberals, we have passed a new law." His eyes sparkled in the flashing cameras. "All lemonade stands are now the property of liberals."

And with that, the liberals took over the stand. And each day, the liberals sold sour lemonade for $5 a glass, and each day bought more dustpans for the shoeless children, and lectured loudly with a big toe atop their stand, and gave out more broccoli than anyone would eat, like the liberals that they were.

Tommy and Lou awoke from their dream.

"Why, Tommy," said Lou as he rubbed his eyes. "Why should we work so hard when they tell us what to do and take everything away?"

"Because," Tommy said, shrugging. "Dad says to keep the American Dream. Come on." Tommy pulled his brother out of bed. "Besides, Dad says that one day we can vote."

And off they went to start squeezing lemons, like the good little conservatives they were.

[Conspiracy]

## BLOCK THE VOTE!

*From a statement signed by Allen Raymond, former head of the political consulting company GOP Marketplace LLC. Raymond pleaded guilty in June to conspiring to violate a federal law that prohibits making "harassing telephone calls," and is due to be sentenced this month. Chuck McGee, the former executive director of the New Hampshire Republican State Committee, pleaded guilty in July to a similar charge. The New Hampshire Democratic Party has filed a separate civil suit charging that the state Republican committee violated constitutional guarantees of an equal right to vote and equal access to the polls. The identity of the "official in a national political organization" has not yet been disclosed.*

In late October 2002, Allen Raymond received a call from a former colleague who was then an official in a national political organization. The official indicated that he had been approached by Chuck McGee with an idea that might give Republicans an edge over Democrats in the upcoming election. The idea involved preventing Democratic "get out the vote" operations from receiving or placing phone calls on election day.

During that and subsequent phone calls, Mr. McGee described the details of his plan to Mr. Raymond—he wanted to hire a group of individuals to call repeatedly without identifying themselves and hang up on several numbers used by Democratic "get out the vote" operations. The individuals would continue the calls all election day, from the time the polls opened at 7:30 in the morning until they closed at night.

Mr. Raymond agreed to engage a vendor to perform the phone jam in exchange for a payment of $15,600, and on October 30, GOP Marketplace located a vendor in Sandpoint, Idaho, to execute the phone jam. Mr. Raymond received an email from Mr. McGee containing "six phone numbers for election day"—one number used by the Democratic headquarters in Manchester; four numbers used by the Democratic field offices in Claremont, Manchester, Nashua, and Rochester; and one number used by the Professional Fire Fighters' Association of Manchester to operate an election day "ride to the polls" program.

The vendor began placing calls at approximately 7:45 A.M. on election day. At approximately 8:58 A.M., Mr. Raymond received a message that Mr. McGee urgently needed to reach him. Mr. Raymond called Mr. McGee, who informed him that the chairman of the New Hampshire Republican State Committee had directed Mr. McGee to halt the phone-jam operation. Mr. Raymond immediately caused a call to be placed to the Idaho vendor, and at approximately 9:10 A.M. the vendor stopped placing calls. Between 7:45 and 9:10, the Idaho vendor placed more than 800 hang-up calls to the six numbers. Mr. Raymond received the check for $15,600 that day and deposited it into GOP Marketplace's account.

That evening, Mr. Raymond called the official who had put Mr. McGee in contact with him. The official informed him that the phone jam had been halted because the chairman of the New Hampshire Republican State Committee had been concerned that it was illegal.

Mr. Raymond spoke with the official again late November, when a Manchester police officer called him to inquire into his involvement in the phone jam. The official initially denied any knowledge of the scheme, but finally admitted that he had recommended that Mr. McGee call Mr. Raymond and had encouraged Mr. Raymond to help Mr. McGee execute the election day phone jam.

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{Curriculum}

# TEACH YOUR CHILDREN GOOD

*[illegible] California Alternative High School [illegible] accredited organization [illegible] Hispanic students across the country [illegible] students to get a certificate and falsely led to believe that it is recognized as a high school diploma. The courses, costing between $450 and $1,450, are targeted at Hispanic immigrants [illegible] that the diploma will make them eligible for financial aid at accredited colleges and help them find better jobs. State officials in California, Nebraska, and Iowa have ordered the school to stop enrolling students.*

Your thoughts are your motivating force, your knowledge is the power that promote good thought, how then can you have good thought without powerful knowledge or how can you have powerful knowledge without learning, or how can you learn without a teacher and how can a teacher teach if he or she has not learned the subject?

The California Alternative High School bestows compassion upon all people who seek to better themselves within the globe, precisely in the United States of America. The school was founded due to the needs in the nation and the high rate of individuals that are not college graduates but more so, the high rate of poverty gave rise to the founding of CAHS among numerous other reasons.

The cost of CAHS is low in comparable to other private high schools. As principal, I am committed in a special way to help the Hispanic population to improve their lives and to get out of poverty. I pledge to work feverishly to change lives from poverty into prosperity and to let individuals see light rather than darkness.

ECONOMICS

Give five definitions of money.
What is scarce resource?
What is your most valuable resource? (Time and Self and neither can be replenished.)

SPEECH

The primary factors in achieving success in professional settings (over $250,000) are as follows: communication skills (71%), intelligence (64%), integrity (54%), experience (50%), enthusiast positive attitude (46%), self-esteem (37%), risk-taking attitude (35%), formal education (29%), ambition (25%), and emotional maturity (16%).
Define: 1) laliophobia 2) demophobia.
The ten most common fears in the United States today are: public speaking, heights, insects and bugs, financial problem, deep water, sickness, death, flying, lonelines, and dogs.
Which do we remember best, faces or names? Faces of course. The images of the faces get in our brains through the eyes. The names get in our brain through the ears. Oh have you tried to explain something complicated to somebody who is having trouble understanding? Then there's a breakthrough and she get it, and says, "Oh, I get the picture," have ever heard anybody say, "Oh, I get the words"?

ENGLISH

What kind of sentence is each of the following?
Do exactly as I tell you.
These are small these transistor radios!
The first to come will receive souvenirs.
Get back.
Use of the Comma?
Oh, no, not another superhighway.
Well, there we were, drifting with the current.
Read the book *Death of a Traveling Salesman* and write a commentary.

GEOGRAPHY

Mention the names of the Oceans?
What is a Plate Tectonic?
Name the two Poles of the Earth?

U.S. HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

What color are the Stripes on the Flag?
What are the four branches of our government? Administrative, Executive, Legislative, Judicial.
What are the duties of the Supreme Courts? Interpret the law. No discrimination, free speech, etc.
Why the pilgrims came to America? Who help the Pilgrim in America? The Indians.
When was the second World War? 1938–1942
Name one benefit of being a citizen of the U.S.?

MATEMATHICS

About half of the calculation used in business involve addition. The more skilled you become in recognizing the sum of any two digits, the more rapidly and accurately you will be able to add.
Zero time any number is? Zero.
Any number time zero is? Zero.
A short cut for multiplying by 25 is to multiply by 100 and divide by 4.
Assuming that children born into a traditional family has more benefits than children not born in a traditional family, do you prefer your child or children born into a traditional or non-traditional family? Give five reasons for your answer.

SCIENCE

How deep is the ocean?

Besides human, which animal are the most intelligent? Chimpanzee, gorilla, orangutan, baboon, monkey.

Is it true that people need less sleep as they get older? The probability is high.

Is the earth flat or round? Answer: round.

SOCIOLOGY

1960–drugs babies, 1970–swallowing goldfish/streaking, 1980–babies having babies, 1990–crack babies.

What is the current death rate in the U.S.A.? 10.

Why we scream when arguing with somebody?

Where is the morality in living with someone when there is no successful future but great sex, as they call it?

What percent of problems are caused by bad people?

Satisfy your emotions with your rolling actions and no production.

Cheap emotional thrills (CET) directed for immediate pleasure is death pasture.

[Outline]

# THE REEFS OF LOVE

*By Robert Desnos, first published, in French, in* La Revue du Cinéma *in 1930. Desnos, a surrealist poet who died in 1945, apparently intended the treatment to be turned into a film, but no such film was ever made. This translation, by Luc Sante, was published in the Spring 2004* Conjunctions.

## PROLOGUE

1. Aerial view of a land with great rivers, immense forests, infinite savannas, without a trace of human settlement or indeed of human life. Overhead is a sky of extreme purity, except on the horizon, where heavy clouds appear to have collapsed one atop another.

2. In the forest: tangles of trees, saplings, brush, and vines. A pond in the middle. A little snaking stream. The scene is half-lit like the bottom of a shallow pool.

3. A sort of trail blazed through the forest: broken branches, severed vines.

4. A bit farther, the remains of a campsite: cold ashes, trampled grass at the foot of a tree.

5. On this tree, a letter carved with a knife.

6. Farther still: another vestige of a campsite. A tree is marked with the same letter.

7. A rapid montage of trees, ever deeper in the forest, each marked with the same mysterious "I."

8. In the middle of the forest, a young man. He holds in his hand the machete with which he has been blazing his trail. His rifle is on the ground, his pistol in his belt. On the ground is the carcass of an animal, a buck or a doe.

9. The man lights a fire and sets to clearing a bit of ground for himself.

10. Night has been falling all the while, and in the high contrast provided by the firelight the man carves the letter "I" in a tree.

11. Across the sea, in another part of the world, a great city: crowded streets, boulevards, large houses. As night falls on the city the streetlights are switched on. The window of a pastry shop, a tobacconist, etc.

12. A beautiful house.

13. Interior: a parlor. A very pretty woman (Irène) and a man of about thirty. They are drinking port. In the grate a wood fire is burning.

14. On the mantel a photograph. It is the portrait of the man we saw in the forest.

15. The man picks up the picture: "Who is he?"

16. The woman: "An old boyfriend."

17. The man shrugs and puts back the picture.

18. The woman kisses him. "Are you jealous?"

19. The man: "Why do you make me suffer?"

20. The woman: "He loved me. I never loved him. It's a souvenir, that's all."

21. The man: "Burn it!"

22. The woman, smiling, throws the photograph into the fire.

## PART ONE

23. Four years earlier. The woman, plainly dressed, on a city street. She drops her handbag. The man from the forest, elegantly dressed, is walking in the opposite direction. He picks up the bag and hands it back to her.

24. A long exchange of gazes. Expression of thanks. The woman walks away while the man (Raoul) stands watching her.

25. The woman arrives in a poor neighborhood and enters a seedy bar. A crowd of men, down and out but all handsome.

26. At a table two men are engaged in a heated discussion that becomes an argument. Suddenly they stand, each with a gun in his hand.

27. The woman: "You're crazy! Not in here . . . the cops."

28. The three leave the bar. The others watch them go. The bartender shrugs.

29. A vacant lot. The two men face to face. The woman stands a few feet away.

30. The men draw their revolvers. They stand so close they are nearly touching. They hand their guns to the woman, who unloads one of them, then shifts them from hand to hand behind her back.

31. The woman: "Choose!"

32. The first man: "The right."



Pierre Path, [illegible] Shadow, filmed [illegible] last summer at Le Butaut in Dauden

33. The second: "The left."
34. The woman distributes the revolvers. The men face off, each placing the barrel of his gun on the other's heart.
35. The woman claps her hands. A shot rings out. One man crumples, clutching his useless weapon.
36. The woman kisses the survivor on the mouth and they leave.
37. Raoul in a fashionable drawing room. Men and women of varied ages.
38. Raoul's fiancée: Marthe.
39. Raoul is distracted. Marthe: "What's on your mind?"
40. Raoul gestures vaguely.
41. In the street, the woman whose hand Raoul picked up (Irène) walks with the winner of the duel. [illegible]
42. On a corner: two shadows, two men. They accost the man and the woman. "Are you ready?"
43. A beautiful house. The three men and Irène walk along the wall. The street is deserted. Suddenly they climb the wall, hoisting one another. The last man acts as lookout.
44. In the drawing room, the [illegible] their goodbyes. Raoul takes leave of Marthe, who goes off with her parents to their [illegible]. Raoul climbs into his vehicle and drives away in a different direction.
45. Irène and the two men inside the house. While she rifles drawers and collects the jewelry, the men pry open the safe.
46. In a bedroom, a servant awakens. He listens. He gets up.
47. He rouses another servant, who sleeps in an adjoining room.
48. The two go silently downstairs.
49. They come to the room where the burglars are at work.
50. The first servant enters.
51. A fight. One of the burglars is knocked down.
52. The other burglar struggles with the servant.
53. The other servant, hidden behind drapes, looks on, trembling.
54. Irène produces a knife and stabs the fighting servant.
55. The servant falls, the knife in his back. His colleague stays hidden. Irène and her accomplice revive the fallen burglar. The three exit.
56. In the street the lookout whistles once.
57. Irène and her friend help the other burglar over the wall and then climb down themselves.
58. Irène sprains her ankle coming down and sprawls on the sidewalk.

59. Raoul's car stops in front of the house.
60. The three burglars freeze. Irène orders them to flee. They run off.
61. As he is about to enter his house, Raoul sees the woman on the ground. He picks her up and, to his astonishment, recognizes her.
62. The woman looks at him.
63. Raoul: "Are you hurt?"
64. Irène is alarmed. He lifts her in his arms and walks to the door.
65. Irène: "No! Not here!"
66. Raoul: "Why not?"
67. Irène, terrified, doesn't answer.
68. Raoul goes straight to his room. He deposits Irène on the bed and heads for the parlor.
69. On the hallway floor: some jewelry. He stops, puzzled.
70. The second servant rushes up and breathlessly tells his story.
71. Raoul, preoccupied, says nothing.
72. The servant presses him toward the parlor.
73. At the door the servant indicates that he dares not enter first. Raoul goes in.
74. The valet lies facedown, a knife in his back. A pool of blood.
75. Raoul sits thinking. Then he makes a sweeping gesture of resolve. The telephone.
76. The police appear. They question the surviving servant.
77. They comb the house, room by room.
78. A split view of Raoul's bedroom door: Irène crouching behind it, knife in hand.
79. Raoul stops the inspector: "Don't go in there! My mistress . . ."
80. The inspector assumes a knowing air: "Indeed . . . a woman of the world, I suppose?"
81. Raoul shows the officers to the outside gate.
82. Raoul goes back to his room, where he finds Irène, knife in hand.
83. "Don't be afraid. They're gone."
84. Irène is surprised.
85. Raoul sits her down on the bed. They stare at each other.
86. Irène: "Why didn't you turn me in?"
87. Raoul, embarrassed, gestures vaguely: "I don't know."
88. Irène throws her arms around Raoul's neck and kisses him on the mouth.
89. Raoul grasps her shoulders and gazes at her for a long time.
90. "How I love you!"
91. Irène kisses his hand: "Darling."

PART TWO

92. The next morning.
93. The servant knocks on the door. Raoul opens it and goes out.
94. Raoul and the servant.
95. Raoul: "Would you recognize the woman from last night?"
96. The servant: "I'd know her in a crowd!"
97. Raoul: "Very good."
98. The servant picks up the breakfast tray he has set on the floor and is about to enter the room.
99. Raoul: "Set my place in the dining room."
100. The servant complies. Raoul locks the door.
101. Raoul finishes his meal. He picks up a pot of jam and a plate of buttered toast and walks back to the bedroom.
102. The servant is surprised to see him carrying away the food.
103. The servant: "I'd like to make up the bed, sir, but your lordship's door is locked."
104. Raoul: "You can do it tomorrow."
105. The servant is taken aback.
106. Raoul lunches alone.

[Bond]

## A FINE ROMANCE

*The following sample "Relationship Contract" was drawn up by Gutierrez, Preciado & House, LLP, a southern California law firm that represents "businesses and public entities in employment lawsuits."*

Employee A, employed by the Company as a paper-pusher, and Employee B, employed by the Company as a paper-pusher supervisor, hereby notify the Company that we wish to enter into a voluntary and consensual social relationship. In entering into this relationship, we both understand and agree that we are both free to end the relationship at any time. Should the relationship end, we both agree that we shall not allow the breakup to negatively impact the performance of our duties.

Prior to signing this Consensual Relationship Contract, we received and reviewed the Company's Sexual Harassment Policy. By signing below, we acknowledge that the relationship between us does not violate the Sexual Harassment Policy, and that entering into the relationship has not been made a condition of employment.

By signing below, we also acknowledge that, under the Confidential Medical Information Act, the Company is prohibited from releasing to one of us any information regarding the other's medical condition, disability, or communicable disease.

_____ _____

Employee A Employee B

eaten, takes it to his room.
109. The servant again notices the subterfuge.
[illegible]
[illegible]ously.
111. Raoul: "No one would guess you killed a man yesterday."
112. Irène shrugs.
113. [illegible]
114. Dinner. Raoul eats alone.
115. Once again he takes something for Irène.
116. The servant spies on him.
117. The servant looks through the keyhole. He recognizes Irène.
118. Hearing a noise, Raoul opens the door.
119. Raoul confronts the servant.
120. The servant enters and points at Irène: "That's her, your lordship, that's her!"
121. Raoul tries to hush him.
122. The servant reaches for the telephone: "I'm calling the police."
123. Raoul grabs his arm.
124. The servant struggles. Raoul and the servant fight.
125. Irène seizes a revolver and puts it in Raoul's hand.
126. The servant tries to deflect the gun.
127. Raoul lets the weapon fall to the floor.
128. The servant takes hold of the revolver.
129. Raoul grasps the servant's wrist.
130. The servant struggles furiously.
131. Raoul places the gun barrel on his adversary's forehead.
132. A shot rings out.
133. Raoul stands over the servant's corpse.
134. Irène: "Now you're my accomplice!"
135. Raoul: "Come."
136. They get into his car.
137. They drive fast a long way through the countryside.
138. Irène: "You drive well. No one would guess you just killed a man."
139. The car stops outside a small isolated house.
140. Raoul and Irène inside the house. Raoul tells her she can hide there.
141. Raoul drives away alone. Irène, smiling mysteriously, watches him go.
142. Raoul enters his house.
143. He goes into his bedroom.
144. The servant's corpse, clutching the revolver.
145. Raoul on the telephone.
146. The police and a doctor arrive on the scene. The police question Raoul. The doctor examines the body.
147. The doctor: "He killed himself."
148. The police chief: "He's the one who pulled the job yesterday."
149. Raoul alone at his window.

PART THREE

150. A beautiful sunny day. Raoul takes Irène back to his house.
151. In the garden.
152. Irène: "Marry me, my accomplice."
153. Raoul tries to kiss her on the mouth.
154. Irène pushes him away: "We're engaged now. Kiss me on the forehead."
155. The wedding. Very elegant. A large crowd.
156. Marthe, Raoul's original fiancée, on the bank of a river.
157. She takes off her hat.
158. She throws herself in.
159. Dusk. Sailors fishing out a body.
160. A country graveyard. A tomb.
161. Another day. Irène with Raoul and a friend in the garden.
162. Raoul leaves for a moment.
163. Irène and Raoul's friend kiss passionately.
164. Raoul comes back suddenly.
165. Irène arrogantly taunts Raoul.
166. The friend, embarrassed, takes his hat and leaves.
167. Raoul: "So you don't love me anymore?"
168. Irène shrugs.
169. Raoul seizes her by the throat.
170. Irène shakes him off violently and motions for him to follow her. They go to her room.
171. She opens a desk drawer.
172. Irène: "I've never loved you—you or anyone!"
173. She throws him a bundle of letters.
174. Raoul reads the letters. They are love letters from many different men.
175. Irène, looking away: "My only true love."
176. A vacant lot, a man sprawled on the ground. We recognize the scene of the duel.
177. Raoul looks at Irène. A moment of silence. Raoul leaves.
178. A harbor.
179. A ship on the ocean.
180. The same view as in the first scene.

EPILOGUE

181. A river running through the savanna. Raoul is panning mud through a sieve.
182. A counter in a trading post.
183. Raoul lays out some diamonds. In return he is given banknotes, ammunition, machetes, revolvers, etc.
184. A jewelry store in the city.
185. Irène and the same man as in the prologue.
186. The jeweler: "Here are some diamonds just arrived from America."
187. Irène tries on the necklace.
188. In the forest, a tree with an "I" carved on its trunk. Night falls.



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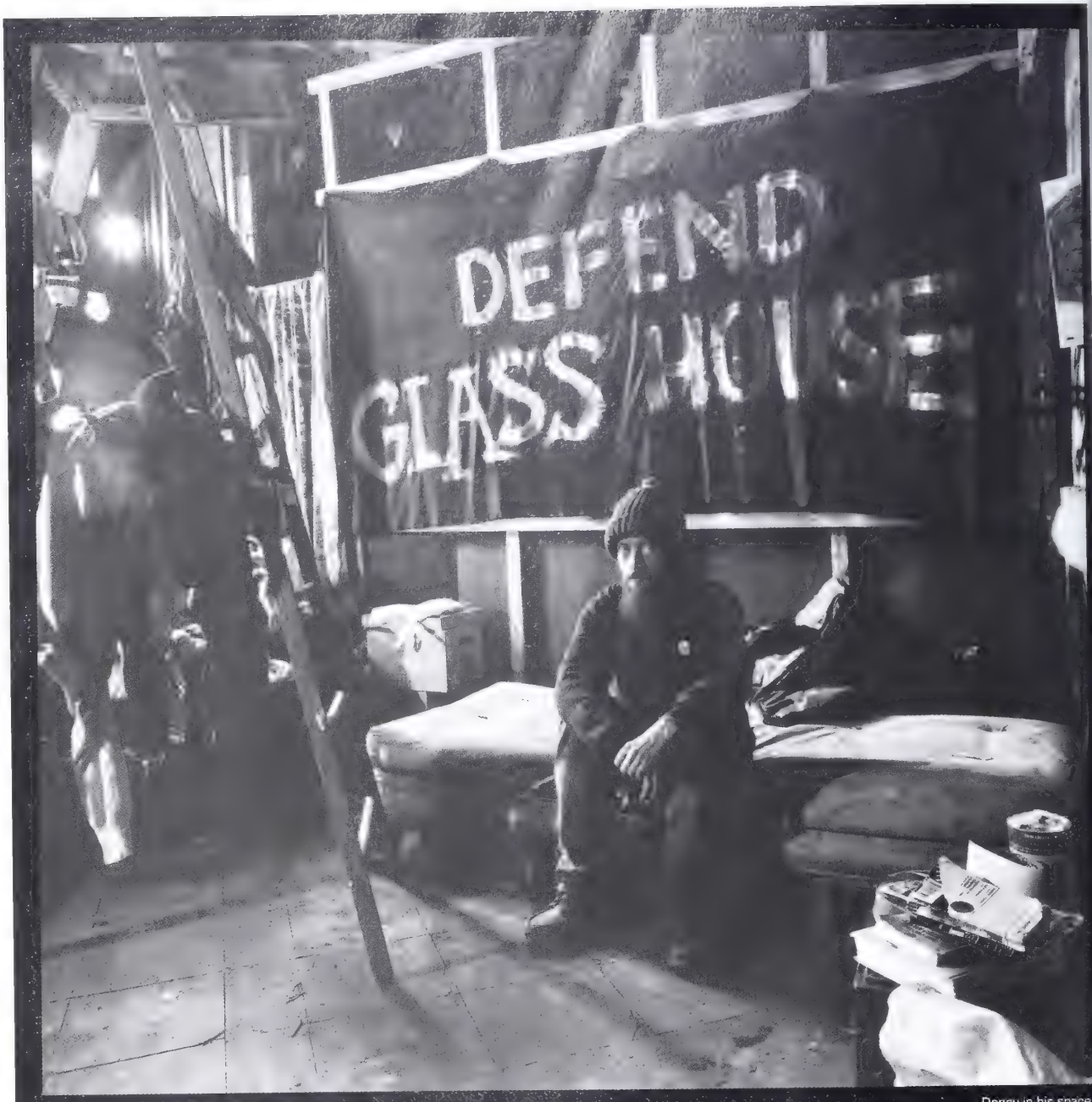
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# WHITEWASH AS PUBLIC SERVICE

## How *The 9/11 Commission Report* defrauds the nation

*By Benjamin DeMott*

No book in memory has stirred greater anticipatory frenzy than *The 9/11 Commission Report*—or more universal acclaim at its appearance in July. Before it was out, news and interview shows were welcoming the Commissioners whose labor had produced it. CNN ran film footage of copies tumbling off printer-plant conveyor belts. Stores reported overnight sellouts of their orders. Officialdom, Republicans *and* Democrats, spoke of the work as magisterial. David Brooks hailed its "moral aura" on PBS's *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*. The President himself—at one time he not only had declined an invitation to answer the Commission's questions but had opposed the Commission's creation—praised the work as "very constructive," and he and the Vice President commenced citing it in speeches; so did John Kerry. By mid-August, 630,000 copies, priced to move at $10, had been sold.

I shared the anticipation—looked forward to the work, badly wanted it, felt excited when I got it in my hands. After years of resistance, leaks, party scraps, feuds, advantage-grabbing, and junk punditry, this plump, red-white-and-blue paperback with the U.S. seal on the cover (567 pages, including a hundred-plus pages of footnotes) had to be the real thing. Some 2,500,000 pages of documents had been sifted, public testimony taken from 160 different witnesses, 1,200 knowledgeable persons interviewed in ten countries (including every top official from two U.S. administrations whose jobs involved intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, immigration, aviation, border control, congressional oversight, you name it). And after twenty long months working with a staff of close to eighty, the ten Commissioners of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States—five Republicans, five Democrats, ex-senators, governors, cabinet secretaries, big-time lawyers—had all signed on.

On television during the nineteen days of hearings, several of which I watched for hours on end, the Commissioners came across as wised-up but with nothing dark inside to hide or atone for. Not cut from the same mold but genuine in separate ways. Philip Zelikow, the executive director, wasn't

*Benjamin DeMott's most recent book is* Junk Politics: The Trashing of the American Mind *(Nation Books). His essay "Junk Politics" appeared in the October 2003 issue of* Harper's Magazine.

THE PLAIN, SAD REALITY IS THAT *THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT*, DESPITE THE VAST QUANTITY OF LABOR BEHIND IT, IS A CHEAT AND A FRAUD

a favorite, I admit; letter perfect and Sunday-school-scrubbed, he was a shade too natural a condescender. But the others . . . Bob Kerrey had earn with blood and limb the right to his Huck Finn "swears" and overplayed p es. Chair Thomas H. Kean's seamed, cherubic face and smiling refusal e to take offense sorted well with Vice Chair Lee H. Hamilton's stern-Gran pa, hands-clasped stoniness. James R. Thompson and Fred F. Fielding oft suspected headline greed in their Commission midst, but they had se enough of it in their time to know how to pretend not to notice. Richa Ben-Veniste: wordy but dogged and blessedly bright. When Attorney Ge eral John Ashcroft commenced damning Jamie S. Gorelick—lady of co stant expectation, splendid preparation, and fine eyes—I thought it silly her colleagues, bipartisan gallants, to rally round as though she had bid f or needed protectors.

But no matter. The report itself was now what counted—the book alo capable of fulfilling the hopes set upon it. The book was offered by W. W Norton, last of the great American publishers, somehow still thriving wit out imitating the schlock houses that choke celebrities with multimillio dollar advances and then choke retail outlets with taped sleaze (no windo space for *writers*). I sat down with the book believing there was no way T *9/11 Commission Report* could fail to produce answers.

This *was* the promise, after all: answers. Answers in return for serious tention. In the preface, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton claimed that t body of the text would "identify lessons learned" from the long stretch of stu interviews, debate, meditation. The implicit guarantee was that ahead l a work of analysis addressed to an intelligent democratic citizenry—

> inventory of possible causes of the tragedy followed by reasoned-out, sober set of judgments about which of the causes were most plausible.

The promise was not kept. The plain, sad reality—I report this f lowing four full days studying the work—is that *The 9/11 Commission Repo* despite the vast quantity of labor behind it, is a cheat and a fraud. It stan as a series of evasive maneuvers that infantilize the audience, transfo candor into iniquity, and conceal realities that demand immediate inspe tion and confrontation. Because it is continuously engaged in scotching attempts to distinguish better from worse leadership responses, the Co mission can't discharge its duty to educate the audience about the habits mind and temperament essential in those chosen to discharge command r sponsibility during crises. It can't tell the truth about what was done and n done, thought and not thought, at crucial turning points. The Comm sioners' immeasurably valuable access to the principals involved offered extraordinary opportunity to amass material precious to future historians: co mentary based on moment-to-moment reaction to major events. But the 5 pages, which purport to provide definitive interpretations of the reactio are in fact useless to historians, because a seeming terror of bias transfor query after commissarial query—and silence after silence—into suggested n lines of self-justification for the interviewees. In the course of blaming eve body a little, the Commission blames nobody—blurs the reasons for the a tions and hesitations of successive administrations, masks choices that, fe lessly defined, might actually have vitalized our public political discours

At the core of all these failures lies a deep wariness of earnest, well-inform public debate. And the wariness is rooted, clearly, in a conception of the r ture of citizen virtue that (1) strips the critical instinct of its standing as sential equipment for the competent democratic mind, and (2) finds *merit* the consumer credulity that relishes pop culture and shrugs off buyer-bew warnings. The ideal readers of *The 9/11 Commission Report* are those who semble the Commission itself in believing that a strong inclination to tr

*The other members of the Commission: Slade Gorton, John F. Lehman, and Timo J. Roemer.*

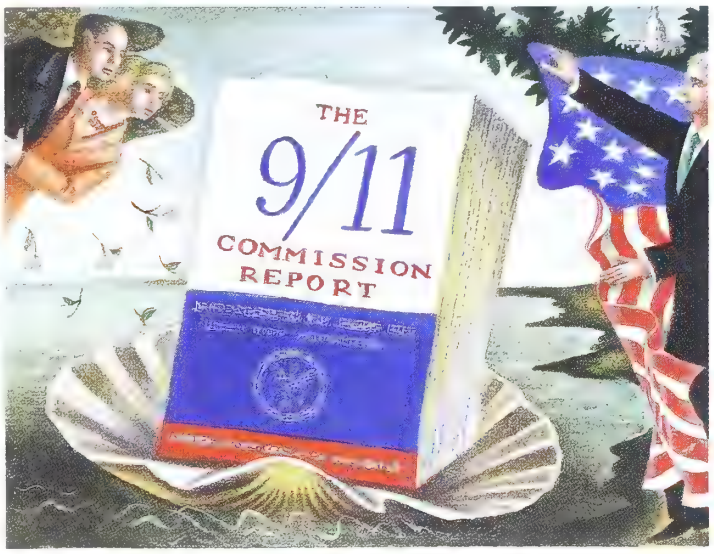
word of highly placed others is evidence of personal moral distinction. As *Report*'s project becomes ever more visibly that of sanctifying equivocation and deference, the Commissioners retreat ever further from evaluating behavior of which their interviews and research nonetheless allow brief npses—behavior on which fair judgments of character and intelligence could l should have been based. Issues of commitment and responsibility are time l again reconfigured as matters of opinion, or as puzzles of memory, or as ntlessly distracting "partisan" squabbles. *See, here it is again*, says the Comission's undervoice. *People differ, of course. But of course. And they believe with utmost sincerity in their own account of events. And they are all honorable men l women. Little can be gained, therefore, by assessing, weighing, in the end pronncing this position—this version—superior to that. Reader, given our shared pro- and undoubted concern for the future of the Republic, let us think process and ucture, forgoing Blame Games. Let us look to the future. We need to move on.*

**E NOBODY TOLD ME SCAM**

There's little mystery about *why* the Commission is tongue-tied. It can't l a liar a liar.

The most momentous subject before the 9/11 Commission was: What did sident Bush know about the Al Qaeda threat to the United States, when he know it, and if he knew little, why so? The Comssion reports that on several occasions in the spring l summer of 2001 the President had "asked his efers whether any of the threats pointed to the ited States." The Commission further reports the sident saying that "if his advisers had told him re was a [terrorist] cell in the United States, they uld have moved to take care of it." Facing his questners in April 2004, the President said he had not n informed that terrorists were in this country.

Conceivably it was at or near the moment when sh took this position that the members of the Comssion who heard him grasped that casting useful nt on the relation between official conduct and nanal unpreparedness would be impossible. The rea? The President's claim was untrue. It was a lie, and Commissioners realized they couldn't allow it to seen as a lie. Numberless officials had appeared be- the whole body of the Commission or before its es, had been sworn in, and had thereafter provid- circumstantial detail about their attempts—bening with pre-election campaign briefings in Sepmber, through November 2000, and continuing straight through the sequent months—to educate Bush as candidate, then as president-elect, n as commander in chief, about the threat from terrorists on our shores. e news these officials brought was spelled out in pithy papers both short l long; the documentation supplied was in every respect impressive.*




THE PRESIDENT'S CLAIM WAS UNTRUE. IT WAS A LIE, AND THE COMMISSIONERS REALIZED THEY COULDN'T ALLOW IT TO BE SEEN AS A LIE

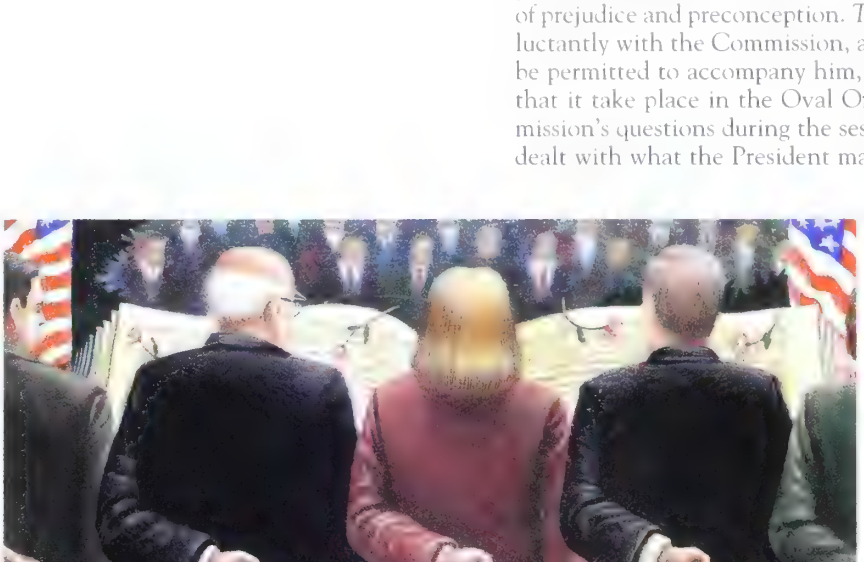
*he papers directed to Bush, including discussion of possible terrorist use of hijacked nes, ranged from National Security Council briefings (e.g., those of March 19, 2001, May 17, 2001) and National Security Council memos (e.g., that of December 29, 00) to email direct from Counterterrorism Security Group Chief Richard Clarke to ndoleezza Rice (on March 23, June 28, and June 30, 2001), as well as a blizzard of A Senior Executive Intelligence Briefs (SEIBs) bearing such titles as "Bin Ladin Plang High-Profile Attacks" (June 30, 2001). The congressionally appointed U.S. Comsion on National Security/21st Century, cochaired by Gary Hart and Warren Rudman, sented its report to the White House in February 2001. The document contained "stark nings about possible domestic terrorist attacks." Bush did not meet with either of the hairs. The officials who did manage to brief Bush in person on these matters included n McLaughlin, the CIA acting deputy director, Ben Bonk, the deputy chief of its Counerrorist Center, and the outgoing president of the United States*

trations by Ray Barkus

A DAWNING HELPLESSNESS NOW BLOCKED THE PATH TO CLARIFICATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES OF THE TRAGEDY

Nevertheless the chief executive, seated before the Commissi declared: *Nobody told me.* And challenging the chief ex ... [illegible] ... encoded an unthinkable cost—the poss ... reveling of the nation's social and political fabric.

The inner sanctum of the 9/11 Commission is closed to intrud only the arrogant would presume to "know" its inner response to this nial. But you cannot grasp the meaning of the *Report* without trying firs understand that response. And it's no mistake to start by imagining the tent of any ordinary person's feelings who had been present at the de and was well informed, prior to the meeting, on the relevant subjects. credulous embarrassment, surely. Pity. A glance turned protectively av to the middle distance, from the witness. A dawning of helplessness in face of the insuperable obstacles now blocking the path to clarificatio responsibility and thorough analysis of the causes of the tragedy. We c not know with any certainty what emotions or disappointments the C mission members actually felt, but the pertinent facts underlying th probable dismay lie far beyond dispute—far beyond off-the-rack accusati of prejudice and preconception. *The record speaks.* George W. Bush met luctantly with the Commission, and on condition that the Vice Presid be permitted to accompany him, that the interview not be recorded, that it take place in the Oval Office.* A significant portion of the C mission's questions during the session, which occurred on April 29, 20 dealt with what the President made of the Presidential Daily Brief, he ed "Bin Ladin Determined to Strik US," that he received, in Crawf Texas, on August 6, 2001, less th five weeks before the 9/11 disas (See page 40, where the relevant t is reprinted in its entirety.) In acc dance with the agreement, the *Re* sets forth the President's reflecti in indirect discourse, as follows:



The President told us the August port was historical in nature. Presid Bush said the article told him that al da was dangerous, which he said he known since he had become Presid The President said Bin Ladin had been talking about his desire to att America. He recalled some operati data on the FBI, and remembered thi ing it was heartening that 70 investigations were under way. As best he c recollect, Rice had mentioned that the Yemenis' surveillance of a federal bu ing in New York had been looked into in May and June, but there was no tionable intelligence.

He did not recall discussing the August 6 report with the Attorney Gen or whether Rice had done so. He said that if his advisers had told him there a cell in the United States, they would have moved to take care of it. That n happened.

The depersonalizing steno-stream mode in which these remarks are rep ed represents them as proceeding fluidly from topic to topic, consecutive

*A small group meeting with the country's chief executive in a White House locale in historical associations and consequence can have intimidating power even for th who aren't strangers to Authority's purlieus. The present writer, holder of no publi fice and never admitted to the Oval Office, can remember a White House meeting Presidential [illegible] held in 1965 in the Cabinet Room, to which a half d teachers with decent professional qualifications if no réclame brought pressing questi about the Vietnam War. The power of the place, not solely of the man's prese worked strongly on each of us; none of our pressing questions found voice.*

asoned, and rousing no impulse to interrupt. But open a space, line by line, ntence by sentence, for informed response (after months of earnest study, ıe Commissioners qualified at the very least as informed), and questions flow —and with them a sense both of the urgent need for critique and of the ırriers preventing that need from being met:

*The President told us the August 6 report was historical in nature.*

Each paragraph of the Bin Laden briefing is directed not at the past but at ıe present or the future. Talk of "bring[ing] the fighting to America," or of ılanning . . . to mount a terrorist strike"—together with the comment that Bin Ladin . . . prepares operations years in advance" and that "Al-Qa'ida . . . aintains a support structure that could aid attacks"—focus on today and ımorrow. If the Commission means to serve fact, it will have to speak in ıs *Report* to correct the presidential error and to establish that the briefing early aimed to warn him of what lay ahead. But how can it speak to that ıd? In what language or tone can an attempt be made to apprise the coun- y of a fateful error by the leader pledged "faithfully" to protect us—a leader ill evidently incapable even of recognizing the error?

*President Bush said the article told him that al Qaeda was dangerous, which he said he had known since he had become President. The President said Bin Ladin had long been talking about his desire to attack America. He recalled some operational data on the FBI, and remembered thinking it was heartening that 70 investigations were under way.*

The Commissioners' absolute imperative here and now is to proceed ıutiously. Their obligation as citizens charged with telling the truth to ıeir fellow citizens is to compare and contrast what the President is say- g with what the Commission already knows. The Commissioners must ɔt silence their questions. As self-respecting leaders aware of the trust ıeir vouchers will bear, they must affirm their own habits of self-doubt, ıeir willingness to check their memory, their readiness to concede that ıey could have misheard or misconstrued. But they must not self-censor ɔpropriate questions, must insist on candor, must not accept words for eds. What then *were* the main assertions?

The President said that the briefing paper told him "al Qaeda was dan- rous," that he had known this since he became president and known too ıat "Bin Ladin had long been talking about his desire to attack America," ıd that he was heartened by news of "70 investigations" under way.

The Commissioners have heard that Bush received more than forty brief- gs naming Al Qaeda as a danger. They have learned from authoritative in- ıiries conducted in 2002 that nothing remotely resembling seventy inves- gations had been launched by the FBI. They are well informed about the rprisingly relaxed presidential response to the danger—a danger of which ush claimed full cognizance. They know this response consisted of two let- rs to the recently installed leader of a foreign country and the voicing of ir- tation to aides about his thwarted yearning to "take the fight to" the insect e called terrorists. The letters the President signed were addressed to the pres- ent of Pakistan, were drafted for him by the State Department, and dealt ith "a number of matters," including a request for "support in dealing with rrorism." The President expressed himself to National Security Adviser ice in March or April of 2001 as "'tired of swatting at flies'" and, on the same casion, declared that he wanted "to play offense. . . . [wanted] to take the ght to the terrorists." In May 2001 the President announced that the Vice esident would head a task force to review "general problems of national pre- ıredness," including management of any domestic attacks by WMD.

Nothing happened. No task-force review had begun by 9/11. Musharraf's sponse to the letters was negative. No flies were swatted. The Commission ıows, in other words, that no "action" was taken for the purpose of protecting ıe American citizenry from the fresh dangers fully described to the President er the immediately preceding months. It knows, in addition, that before 9/11, ıd in the frantic days afterward, departmental secretaries and undersecre-

THE COMMISSIONERS' OBLIGATION AS CITIZENS IS TO COMPARE WHAT THE PRESIDENT IS SAYING WITH WHAT THE COMMISSION ALREADY KNOWS

IF THE COMMISSION MEANS TO SERVE FACT, IT CANNOT AVOID ADDRESSING THE GAP BETWEEN BUSH'S AVOWED AWARENESS AND HIS ACTUAL IMPASSIVITY

[illegible] thoroughly but unrelentingly—for the bombing [illegible] Iraq, in meetings with, and in briefings written for, the President. And it kne[w] that Bush himself was seeking justification, from his counterterrorism chi[efs] for an attack on Saddam.

If the Commission means to serve fact, it simply cannot avoid addre[ssing] ing in this *Report* the gap between avowed presidential awareness of d[omestic] mestic terrorist danger and actual presidential impassivity. It will have draw on its own resources for insight into whether the President assess[ed] Bin Laden as a toothless blustering braggart, whether he shared Attorn[ey] General Ashcroft's reported view that warnings about Al Qaeda were ti[red] some and needless, whether he now understood that he most assure[dly] should have asked questions about the "heartening" seventy investi[gative] tions, and—most excruciating—whether the President as they question[ed] him had yet come to realize that the hijackings, the collapse of the To[wers], ers, the enormous toll at the Pentagon and elsewhere, *might* have be[en] prevented had more dutiful, responsible attention been paid to the urg[ent] exhortations from the experts in his service.

*[The President] did not recall [anyone] ... the August 6 report with the Attorney G[eneral] ... or whether Rice had [done] ... [H]e said that if his advisers had told him there w[as a] cell in the United States, they would have moved to take care of it. That never happen[ed].*

The President asserts that no adviser told him about a cell and, furth[er] that on several occasions in spring and summer 2001 he "asked his briefe[rs] whether any of the threats pointed to the United States." The August 6 bri[efing] ing paper states without ambiguity that a cell—people h[aving] having as members of a cell—existed at that time. T[he] record clearly establishes that George W. Bush was t[old] repeatedly, from September 2000 onward, of precisely su[ch] threats. The Commission knew that experts—terroris[m] specialists who worked around the clock (often taking thr[ee] meals a day at their desks) had composed har[d] burning tirades, had dared at length to "screa[m] unavailingly for attention, and had finally begg[ed] in despair to be relieved of posts render[ed] utterly meaningless by their superio[rs'] unresponsiveness.

In September 2000, before the election, Jo[hn] McLaughlin, then acting deputy director of the CI[A]



*The following is the text of an item from the Presidential Daily Brief received by President George W. Bush on August 6, 2001.[1] Redacted material is indicated by brackets.*

Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in US

***Clandestine, foreign government, and media reports indicate Bin Ladin since 1997 has wanted to conduct terrorist attacks in the US.*** Bin Ladin implied in US television interviews in 1997 and 1998 that his followers would follow the example of World Trade Center bomber Ramzi Yousef and "bring the fighting to America."

After US missile strikes on his base in Afghanistan in 1998, Bin Ladin told followers he wanted to retaliate in Washington, according to a [—] service.

An Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) operative told an [—] service at the same time that Bin Ladin was planning to exploit the operative's access to the US to mount a terrorist strike.

***The millennium plotting in Canada in 1999 may have been part of Bin Ladin's first serious attempt to implement a terrorist strike in the US.*** Convicted plotter Ahmed Ressam has told the FBI that he conceived the idea to attack Los Angeles International Airport himself, but that Bin Ladin lieutenant Abu Zubaydah encouraged him and helped facilitate the operation. Ressam also said that in 1998 Abu Zubaydah was planning his own US attack.

Ressam says Bin Ladin was aware of the Los Angeles operation.

***Although Bin Ladin has not succeeded, his attacks against the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 demonstrate that he prepares operations years in advance and is not deterred by setbacks.*** Bin Ladin associates surveilled our Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam as early as 1993, and some members of the Nairobi cell planning the bombings were arrested and deported in 1997.

***Al-Qa'ida members—including some who are US citizens—have resided in or traveled to the US for years, and the group apparently maintains a support structure that could aid attacks.*** Two al-Qa'ida members found guilty in the conspiracy to bomb our embassies in East Africa were US citizens, and a senior EIJ member lived in California in the mid-1990s.

A clandestine source said in 1998 that a Bin Ladin cell in New York was recruiting Muslim-American youth for attacks.

***We have not been able to corroborate some of the more sensational threat reporting, such as that from a [—] service in 1998 saying that Bin Ladin wanted to hijack a US aircraft to gain the release of "Blind Shaykh" 'Umar 'Abd al-Rahman and other US-held extremists.***

Nevertheless, FBI information since that time indicates patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks, including recent surveillance of federal buildings in New York.

The FBI is conducting approximately 70 full field investigations throughout the US that it considers Bin Ladin-related. CIA and the FBI are investigating a call to our Embassy in the UAE in May saying that a group of Bin Ladin supporters was in the US planning attacks with explosives.

ımped at Bush's ranch in Texas with a CIA team bringing the harrow-
g message. Ben Bonk, deputy chief of the CIA's Counterterrorist Cen-
r, was among the experts who told Bush that Americans would die in
rrorist acts led or inspired by Bin Laden during the next four years. Au-
ıoritatively assembled material was submitted to the Bush/Cheney tran-
tion team spelling out the fact that "al Qaeda had 'sleeper cells' in more
ıan 40 countries, including the United States." An attachment to this
ıper, submitted in January 2001, focused on "al Qaeda's presence in the
ınited States." When James Pavitt, CIA deputy director for operations,
·iefed the president-elect at Blair House, he described Bin Laden as
ɔne of the gravest threats to the country." Bill Clinton told Bush in a
vo-hour session on national security: "'I think you will find that by far
ɔur biggest threat is Bin Ladin and the al Qaeda.'" Clinton spoke as one
ho had lived through a rain of jihadist bombs—the *Black Hawk Down*
ıcident, the African embassies, the *Cole*, the Millennium Threat,
nong them. Bush later said that he "felt sure President Clinton had
entioned terrorism, but did not remember much being said about al
aeda." All this is in the *Report* for anyone to see.

Given the evidence, the Commissioners who meant to serve fact—
eant truly to foster the future security of this country—would have had
ɔ confront, through words and acts, the gap between the President's ab-
ırd, nobody-told-me assertions and the plain record before them of re-
ɛated attempts to draw his attention away from Iraq to the threat that
osed the very street on which he and his family lived. They would have
ɛen forced to raise the question, to themselves and to their audience, of
hether this level of ignorance and obliviousness, this much incontro-
ɛrtible proof of neglect and indifference, could be passed over in silence
y men and women of patriotic good conscience. They would have been
rced to admit to themselves that they knew what they knew.

And what about the other problem—the problem of self-reference? Put
ıuntly, what about themselves? People do not take up posts on such a
ɔmmission as this, in middle or late life, with the expectation of being
ɔused and condemned as party hacks, too mean and narrow to rise above
ɔcal loyalties. Hope whispers in the Commissioner's ear that a states-
ıan's status can be achieved—a generous, large-souled identity deserving
istorical mention.

And therefore the previous questions return in a different key. Can the
atus of statesman be won if the Commissioners assert themselves as
ɛad-serious, fact-finding interrogators? Can the Commissioners speak
ɣen to one another, privately, about their need to confront executive
ıalfeasance without becoming, after months of painfully disciplined self-
ɾacing against partisan self-indulgence, provokers of partisan fury?
/ould they not inevitably dwindle into yet another collection of squab-
ling defectives dealing in sly insinuations and rightfully dismissed as
nerely political"? And is it, finally, impermissible, after twenty months of
ard labor, to think not only of protecting the Republic and the President
ıt to think at last of themselves?

With that question, perhaps, came clarity: better to silence disquiet,
issatisfaction, disbelief, than to voice them. The interest neither of na-
on nor of career would be advanced by rancorous quarrels about lies and
ɔver-ups. The overriding need was to move on.

### /E ARE ALL GUILTY

Both the mission and terms of the *Report* were dictated by this clarity and
ıis need. The Commission's evasions, silences, and suppressions of doubt dur-
ıg the ninety-minute Bush-Cheney session led directly to an array of other
ıspicion-stirring evasions and silences. The necessity thereafter was to con-
ruct a *Report* whose parts would move together toward two tightly inter-
ɔnnected goals: (1) sweeping questions of presidential character off the

COULD THIS LEVEL OF IGNORANCE AND OBLIVIOUSNESS BE PASSED OVER IN SILENCE BY MEN AND WOMEN OF PATRIOTIC GOOD CONSCIENCE?

THE SITUATION FOLLOWING [illegible] BUSH-CHENEY INTERVIEW REQUIRED A STRATEGY THAT GENERATED PLAUSIBLE GROUNDS FOR NOT ASKING QUESTIONS

table and (2) presenting the Commission's equivocation as the result not [illegible] cognition of the power of the contingent, [illegible] to human life. What the Commissioners had supply amount[illegible] alibi, both for the President and for themselves.

[illegible] in time, among scholars, on whether the *Report* [illegible] derived from exceptionally clever narrative management [illegible] monitoring of each of its sentences in order to clear [illegible] any partisan utility whatsoever. My view is that the au[illegible] the document and the public servants who produced [illegible] ing incomprehension, in contemporary America, of t[illegible] the progressive curve of human development racy is meant to forward.

[illegible] what matters is that the situation the Commissioners faced follo[illegible] Bush-Cheney interview required, and was met with, a *strategy* th[illegible] generated plausible grounds for *not* spelling out questions, not seeking a [illegible] Only if such grounds were visible could the Commission protect [illegible] self from the charge that for no cause it was treating dismissively thc who, face-to-face with *their* superiors, did spell out questions, did seek a swers. Only if such grounds were established could the *Report* ward [illegible] complaints that it had wrongly failed to confront not only the original u[illegible] true assertion (nobody told me) but virtually every other presidential [illegible] sertion or action or inaction that warranted objection.

Those objectionable assertions and behavior succeed one another, number, throughout the *Report*, and a few are quite familiar, but neve theless they bear reminder here:

- The President explains that it was in order to "project strength a[illegible] calm" that he remained for five to seven minutes in a children's cla[illegible] room after being told that the nation was under attack. The *Rep*[illegible] passes over this mindless explanation without cavil.
- Details in the President's, Vice President's, and other accounts of the fra[illegible] ing and delivery of the "presidential" order to shoot down the hijack[illegible] airlines inspire severe doubt that the order came from Bush himse[illegible] rather than from an official—Vice President Cheney—with no milita[illegible] authority. The Commission's fudging summary declines to discuss rel[illegible] vant issues of alertness and awareness of constitutional obligations.
- When, because an insider has managed to put into print *noticed* criticis[illegible] of the Bush performance, the Commission has no alternative except [illegible] acknowledge the existence of a critical perspective, it marginalizes a[illegible] deprecates the critic. Richard Clarke's charge that Bush attempted to "i[illegible] timidate" him into finding a link between Saddam and the 9/11 cat[illegible] strophe, for instance, is placed not in the body of the text but in a foc[illegible] note located seven pages from the end of the book. Readers learn in t[illegible] body of the text that Clarke's portfolio was contemptuously referred [illegible] as "drugs and thugs"; his fierce, pre-9/11 attempts to force attention [illegible] Al Qaeda rather than on Iraq are labeled "jeremiads."
- When the Commission must cope with material that conceivably w[illegible] give rise to renewed accusations that Bush and his administration a[illegible] mere agents of corporate greed, it speaks as though corporate policy [illegible] shaped solely by missionary desire to perfect services in accord wi[illegible] public demand. The bottom-line fixations of commercial airlines a[illegible] security services—corporate entities that bear awful responsibility f[illegible] the tragedy—go unmentioned. Concern for efficient transport [illegible] ceaselessly trumpeted.
- When the sheer quantity of fully articulated messages of alarm warni[illegible] Bush of imminent, possibly "calamitous," domestic terror attacks edg[illegible] the Commission toward acknowledging its inability to locate Bush[illegible] articulated responses, it presents presidential fits of pique ("tired [illegible] swatting at flies") as "policy directives."

And so it goes—an array of doublespeak renamings, ill-accounted-f[illegible] deprecations, evasions, silences, all demanding some kind of justificatio[illegible]

he *Report* meets this demand with a shrewdly conceived and sustained quity-of-blame argument that becomes the fulcrum of the entire document and has a single principle at its center: *any blame that might be apporned to the behavior of the sitting administration is easily counterbalanced by the behavior of preceding authorities—and by historical "fact" as interpreted in accordance with current presidential and commissarial need.*

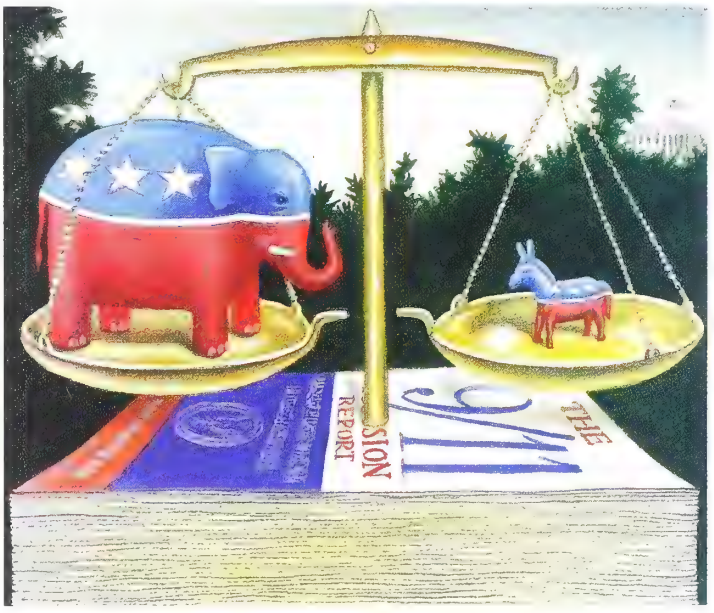
Skewed history is indeed the key element in the operation of the *Rert*'s argument. In these pages history is in part an excessively circumstanal rehearsal of failed attempts by the United States, over the decades, to conict effective initiatives against terrorist plots. (Remember Robert MacFarlane, itional security adviser when hostages were taken in Iran; remember Carter's Desert One"; remember Clinton's Somalia disaster.) The question implicit clear: How can anyone who obeys the injunction to remember the past fault is sitting administration when so many others have failed so miserably? Hisry in the *Report* is partly a record of refusals by previous authorities to suprt efforts to strengthen the CIA. (If Bush is guilty of inattentiveness to CIA iefing papers, Clinton is guilty of refusing to back legation strengthening the CIA.)

History is also partly a minutely examined series of -called "missed opportunities" during the Clinton ears—chances, that is, to take out Al Qaeda, assasnate Bin Laden, receive an imprisoned Bin Laden a gift from Sudan, bomb his training sites, conict "rolling attacks" on his Afghan bases, destroy his eapons-building capacity (a nerve-gas factory in dan), wipe out his networks. The Commission acnowledges the constraints on Clinton, including e wag-the-dog accusation ultimately levied that by nding cruise missiles into Afghanistan and Sudan was seeking to change the subject from Monica ewinsky. Further constraints run the gamut from a earth of solid intelligence about Bin Laden's whereouts to sane anxiety about collateral casualties to e certainty that, absent clear proof (lacking in the eriod specified) of Al Qaeda–inflicted casualties on .S. citizens, the Muslim world would damn such tion as unprovoked and savagely invasive.

Yet the *Report* weighs these constraints lightly, aking space for numerous remarks attacking Clinn for failure to act, including a harsh judgment, the racist Lt. Gen. William Boykin, that "'opportunities were missed ecause of an unwillingness to take risks and a lack of vision and underanding.'" And the Commission nowhere spells out for the reader the ertinent facts that exploitable opportunities simply did not exist in the linton years, though the White House searched indefatigably to find ne, and that speaking or writing as though the opposite were true, as ough opportunities abounded, contributes nothing to clarity, only clears t another stage on which the Commission can develop and improvise n its equity-of-blame theme. Clinton's prudent hesitation to strike Bin Laden, in other words, becomes the moral equivalent of Bush's lack of concern, even post-9/11, about Bin Laden.

By far the most striking Commission improvisation on this theme curs in the treatment of the USS *Cole* episode. The bombing of the ship ok place on October 12, 2000 (seventeen crew members were killed). he Bush-Gore election occurred on November 7, 2000. The *Report* observes yly that "there was a notable absence of serious discussion of the

THE *REPORT* ATTACKS CLINTON FOR FAILURE TO ACT DESPITE THE FACT THAT EXPLOITABLE OPPORTUNITIES SIMPLY DID NOT EXIST IN THE CLINTON YEARS



THERE CAN BE NO DOCUMENTED GUILT HERE, NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN ONE ADMINISTRATION'S CONCERN AND THE INDIFFERENCE MARKING THE OTHER

al Qaeda threat [illegible] campaign. It's entirely obvious that a Lan[illegible] launched with the Florida debacle in mi[illegible] course; less obvious is that no definitive evidence had yet come to light t[illegible] ing the [illegible] Bin Laden. Intricately prepared for and justifie[illegible] the major plank of the Commission's argument that responsibility for the 9/1[illegible] disaster can't be laid at any one door is that the "failure" of President Cli[illegible] ton to respond to the bombing encouraged Bin Laden to go forward with h[illegible] attack. [illegible] which is to say, the "failure" itself qualifies as a hidde[illegible] of [illegible] attack.

And this becomes the heart of the Commission's case for equivalen[illegible] between Clinton's and Bush's "concern" about the Al Qaeda dang[illegible] Time and again the Commission speaks of the inaction of the two pre[illegible] dents as though no consequential differences existed in the reasons for th[illegible] inaction: "After 9/11, President Bush announced that al Qaeda was r[illegible] sponsible for the attack on the USS *Cole*. Before 9/11, neither preside[illegible] took any action. Bin Ladin's inference may well have been that attacks, [illegible] least at the level of the *Cole*, were risk free." More than once, the *Rep[illegible]* insists on the significant (in fact, purely fanciful) sameness in the dile[illegible] mas of the two administrations: "Since the Clinton administration ha[illegible] not responded militarily, what was the Bush administration to do?"

In reality, voices within the Bush White House answered loudly that ple[illegible] ty could and should be done. As the threat level rose, so did the shrillness a[illegible] rage of those bent on dramatizing, to the President, the fearful mistake of i[illegible] noring the threats and concentrating on battle plans for the conquest [illegible] Iraq. At the peak of his own fear and desperation, on September 4, 2001, th[illegible] government's terrorism chief wrote what the Commission conceded to be[illegible] fiercely "impassioned personal note" to Condoleezza Rice. In enraged italic[illegible] Richard Clarke complains that "'*we continue to allow the existence of lar[illegible] scale al Qida bases where we know people are being trained to kill Americans.*'" B[illegible] there proves to be no audience. The Commission offers at this moment a s[illegible] guess about why, in the form of an explanation of Clarke's fury: the man su[illegible] fers from sour grapes. "After nine years on the NSC staff and more tha[illegible] three years as the president's national coordinator, he has often failed to pe[illegible] suade these agencies to adopt his views, or to persuade his superiors to set [illegible] agenda of the sort he wanted or that the whole government could suppor[illegible] Presidents Bush and Clinton stand together, by implication, in this resistanc[illegible]

Here as elsewhere the Commission cannot allow to stand, unquestione[illegible] words that directly indict George W. Bush for obliviousness, thereby upse[illegible] ting its carefully balanced blame-canceling mechanism. There can be no do[illegible] umented guilt here, no history focused on inquiry into the distinction b[illegible] tween the quality and intensity of one administration's concern and th[illegible] current of indifference marking the other's. The narrative line carries the sin[illegible] ple dictum: blame must be equally apportioned, and no comparative lesso[illegible] about conduct are to be drawn. Only then can everyone involved, not e[illegible] cluding the Commissioners themselves, be purged and purified. Well befo[illegible] the end, the dictum about equality of blame reduces the Commissioners [illegible] mere long-winded sermonizers against judgment. Their *Report* seems ever mo[illegible] plainly bent not on achieving fresh knowledge but on dramatizing balanc[illegible] It thereby becomes aimless, out of touch with the purpose of serious i[illegible] quiry, resembling an eighteen-wheeler paying endless visits to weigh statio[illegible] but never delivering a load, or a rigged pinball game whose overdelicate se[illegible] sors can't record scores, can only parrot TILT.

**TELL ME A STORY**

By the end of my reading I was sufficiently familiar with the *Report*'s u[illegible] dervoice to know exactly what it wanted from me. The ultimate comma[illegible] to the reader is utterly unambiguous: you must not give in to fury and ou[illegible] rage as you read *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Rise up: this is the implicit e[illegible] hortation. Aspire to forbearance. Ask some height of yourself. Tell the us[illegible]

Tempters (suspicion, blame, impulse to judge) to bugger off. You, too, Read-, can join the ranks of the blameless.

If the Commissioners' summons to moral elevation had been founded in spect for the unspeakable pain of victims and survivors, heeding it might e a smaller problem. But sympathy isn't what drives the Commission's mmons, and the equanimity the Commission promotes is no light bringer. his document—already elevated to iconic status—qualifies, as I said at ie start, as a weapon in a major domestic conflict: the war on incisive, metimes rudely disruptive critical thought—thought that distinguishes ie democratic citizen from the idolatrous fool, the sucker, the clueless con-mer, the ad person's delight.

The hostility to critical thought is evident, of course, in the remarkable ehemence of the Commission's assault on the blaming sensibility—its mul-fariousness, its canniness, the powerful synchrony between it and the na-on's ever increasing hunger for the upbeat and the positive. But almost equal-telling is the decision not to treat the audience as citizens with minds to e challenged but—regularly—as children with a taste for fairy tales.

The Commission's book comes on, bewilderingly, as a pop entertainment, serving the conventions of old-time nonfiction narrative, tucking into it-of-the-way corners passages that approach complex or abstract matters. hapters open with standard ominous-menace hooks (dread is nigh and no ne suspects): "Tuesday, September 11, 2001, dawned temperate and near-cloudless in the eastern United States." Chapters end with nightmare cur-in lines: "If the instigation for jihad against the Jews and Americans to lib-ate the holy places 'is considered a crime,' [Bin Laden] said, 'let history be witness that I am a criminal.'" Children's book talkdown is leaned on to al-y anxiety that some dry-as-dust, demanding lecture, bereft of entertain-ent value, on a quick-doze topic such as government organization, is in the fing: "We mention many personalities in this report. As in any study of the .S. government, some of the most important characters are institutions. We ill introduce various agencies, and how they adapted to a new kind of ter-rism." Hide-and-seek games are also played, particularly with presidential mments, which are scattered throughout like Hansel and Gretel breadcrumbs.

And there's a constant flashing of cowboy quotations. Scooter Libby lling how fast the tough Vice President makes a momentous decision 'in about the time it takes a batter to decide to swing'"). Control-tower lk ("'[I]f they're there then we'll run on them. . . . These guys are nart'"). At some moments every voice seems mired in fighter-jockese, ending stoic understatement à la *The Right Stuff* with go-for-it machismo hoing Sunday night TV flicks ("'I don't care how many windows you eak,'" he said. "'Damn it. . . . Okay. Push them back'").

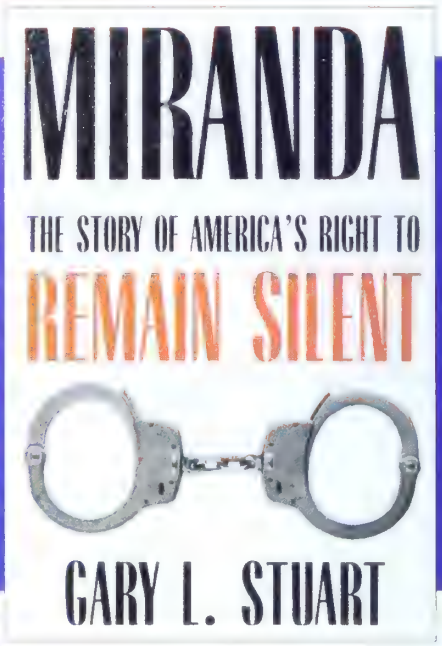
The pop ambience helps explain the huge sales. It encourages relax-ion, discourages the student posture—the ambition to learn, under-and, find solid ground for judgments. (*This will be gripping, Reader, not xing. Enjoy.*) The invitation to lighten up in itself evokes *non*-judgmen-lism, not lesson learning, as the key to having a nice day.

The Commission, in sum, offers peace through exculpation, evasion, *and* ntertainment—and in doing so dangerously reenergizes a national relish for ntasy. Given a chance to brace the electorate with incontrovertible evi-nce that the search for leadership must be a search for flexible intelligence, idlessly curious and rapid, devouring in its appetite for the *whole* body of nowledge bearing on fateful choices, the Commission speaks out for loose-nbed feel-good geniality and artful dodging. Its vote for harmony is per-ctly comprehensible, but as the costs of the vote are weighed, the *impera-ve* of protest against it stands forth as immensely more comprehensible—and st. "In all the general concerns," James Fenimore Cooper wrote long ago, 1838, "the publick has a right to be treated with candor. Without this man-and republican quality . . . [American] institutions are converted into stu-ndous fraud." Faced with *The 9/11 Commission Report*, this country's true ed now is to shout *Shame!* ■

THE *REPORT*'S POP AMBIENCE ENCOURAGES RELAXATION, DISCOURAGES THE AMBITION TO LEARN, UNDERSTAND, FIND SOLID GROUND FOR JUDGMENTS

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# THEY CAME OUT LIKE ANTS!

## *Searching for the Chinese tunnels of Mexicali*

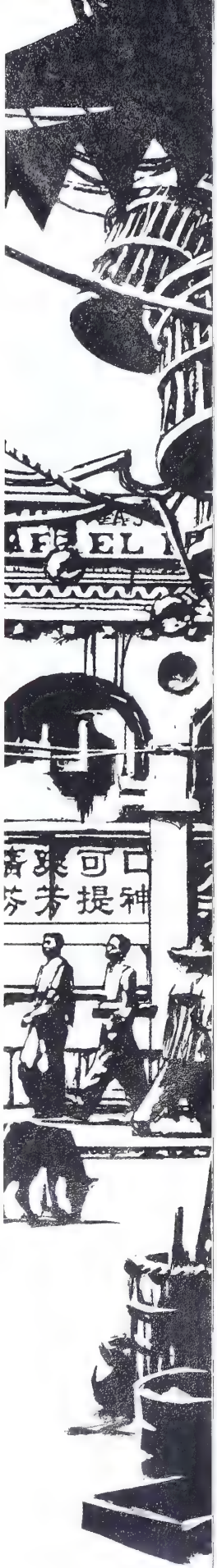
By William T. Vollmann

It was on Good Friday night, at the threshold of hat church on Avenida Reforma, in Mexicali, Mexico, with the Virgin of Guadalupe's image invisible overhead and the border wall faintly discernible, like a phosphorescent log in a dark forest, that I first met the sisters Fernández. When the loudspeaker laughed *María, la Madre de Jesús,* I thought they looked sincerely distressed, Susana in particular. The crucifixion had just occurred again. When they mentioned Jesus, Mary, and Judas, they were speaking of people they knew intimately. Later their talk turned to Mexicali, and they began to tell me about the time the great fire when all the Chinese who lived secretly and illegally under the ground came out "like rats," to escape the burning; and everybody was shocked at how many of them there were. Susana and Rebeca had not yet been born when that happened, but it remained as real to them as the betrayal of Christ. I couldn't decide whether to believe them. When was this great fire? They weren't sure. But they knew that Chinese—*many, many* Chinese, as they kept saying—used to hide in tunnels in Mexicali. Chinese tunnels. Well, why shouldn't there be Chinese tunnels in Mexicali? I'd seen the Valley of the Queens in Egypt (dirt and gravel hills, sharp-edged rock shards, then caves); I'd convinced myself of the existence of Pompeii's Anfiteatro, which is mainly a collar of grass now, with a few concentric ribs of stone beneath. Havre, Montana, still maintains its underground quarter as a source of tourist revenue: here's the bordello; there's the purple-glassed skylight; and don't forget to see the old black leather dentist drill, a foot drill, actually, which was operated by the patient! Why shouldn't there be more than sand beneath Mexicali?



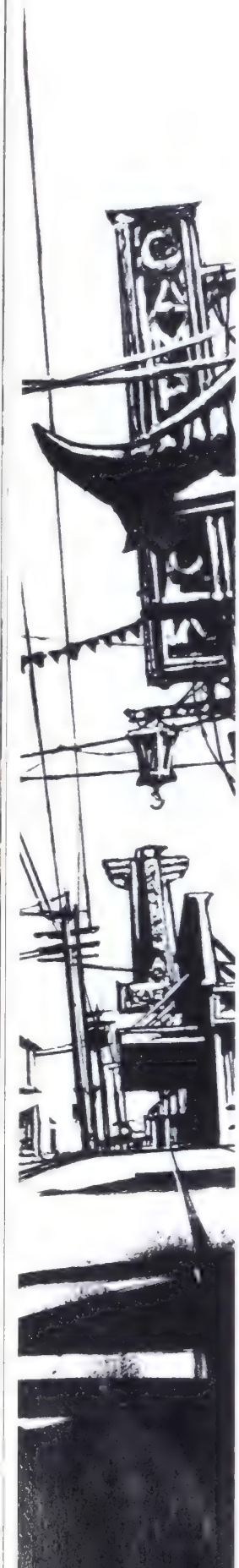
José Lopez, a freelance tour guide with two blackened front teeth, told me that a year or two ago a friend of his had delivered a truckload of fresh fish from San Felipe up to a certain Chinese produce market in Mexicali. What was the address of this market? José couldn't say. It was surely somewhere in the Chinesca, the Chinatown. The merchant opened a door, and José's friend glimpsed a long dark tunnel walled with earth. What's that? he asked. You don't need to know, came the answer. José's understanding was that even now the Chinese didn't trust banks. They kept their money under the ground.

The owner of the Golden China Restaurant believed that there were four or five thousand Chinese in Mexicali. A certain Mr. Auyón, said to be a world-famous painter of horses, informed me that there were currently eight thousand Chi-



*William T. Vollmann's most recent books are* Europe Up and Rising Down.

Illustrations by Danijel Zezelj



nese, thirty-two thousand half-Chinese, and a hundred Chinese restaurants.

Most of the Chinese were legal now, but in the old days they'd come to the U.S. illegally, and then their relatives or Tong associates had concealed them in those tunnels, which, it was widely believed, still extended under "all downtown"; and there was even supposed to be a passageway to Calexico, California, though none of the storytellers had seen it, and some allowed that it might have been discovered and sealed decades ago by the Border Patrol. I've read that during Prohibition *in the Chinese district of Mexicali, tunnels led to opium dens and brothels, and for the convenience of bootleggers, one of them burrowed under the international line to Calexico*, which might have been that tunnel, or a precursor, under the cantina around the corner from the Hotel Malibu. Mexicans bought me drinks there, and insisted that the tunnel still existed.

A tunnel under the Hotel Del Norte was discovered and closed in the 1980s; the Chinese didn't have anything to do with that one, I'm told. In the autumn of 2003, people with guns and uniforms found another tunnel that began in a mechanic's shop east of the Chinesca and came up in Calexico—in a fireplace, I was told—but it wasn't a Chinese tunnel. A whore in the Hotel Altamirano said she knew for a fact that the Chinese had been behind that tunnel, because *they always work in secret*. Frank Waters recalls in his memoir of the days when the Colorado River still flowed to the sea that in 1925 Chinese were smuggled across the border *in crates of melons, disguised as old Mexican señoras, and even carried by plane from Laguna Salada*. Perhaps they traveled by tunnel as well. From the Chinatown in Mexicali to the one in Los Angeles, both of which have since burned. *They came out like ants!*



My own mental image of the tunnels grew strangely similar to those long aboveground arcades on both sides of the border; on certain very hot summer nights when I have been under a fever's sway, with sweat bursting out on the back of my neck and running down my sides, the archways have seemed endless; their sidewalks pulse red like some science-fiction nightmare about plunging into the sun, and as I walk home out of Mexico, the drunken woman and the empty throne of the shoeshine man are but artifacts, lonely and sparse, within those immense corridors of night. I wander down below the street and up again for the border formalities, which pass like a dream, and suddenly I find myself in the continuation of those same arcades, which are quieter and cooler than their Mexican equivalents. Bereft of the sulphur-sweet stink of the feculent New River, which loops northwest as soon as it enters the United States, they extend block after block in the same late night dream.

It seemed that everyone knew about these tunnels—everybody in Mexicali, that is. But when I crossed the border to inquire at the Pioneers Museum, two old white men who'd lived in Imperial County all their lives stared at me, not amused at all, and replied they'd never heard anything about any tunnels. Up in Brawley, Stella Mendoza, wife, mother, ex-director and continuing representative of her Imperial Irrigation District, passionate defender and lifelong resident of Mexica America, who spoke Spanish, traced back he ancestry to Sonora, and went to Mexicali "a the time," said that the tunnels were likewis news to her. But why should we Americans kno anything about Chinese tunnels in Mexico?

## VAMPIRES AND CIGARETTES

The clandestine nature of the tunnels lent i self to supernatural evocations. About thirty yea ago a rumor had settled on Mexicali that the Ch nese were harboring a vampire down there. La er it came out that the creature was human but "mutant," very hairy, two of whose lower teeth ha grown like fangs right through the skin above h upper lip. He "escaped," said the woman who' seen him, but the Chinese recaptured him, an that was the end of the story. I asked José Lope whether he believed this tale, and he said, "Lool You have to keep an ope mind. In the 1960s th Devil himself came t Mexicali. He actuall killed a woman! Every body knew it was the Dev il. If you keep a close mind, you can't believe i But why not believe it?"

*They live like cigarette* said a Mexican journali on a Sunday, cramming a his upright fingers togeth er as if he'd shoved them into a box. He advise me to search for people who looked *like th* (pulling his eye corners upward), because on they could tell me everything. Although he never seen one, his sources inclined him to b lieve that there might be a tunnel under Co dominios Montealbán, those ill-famed grimy co crete apartments beside the Río Nuevo, whe tired women, some Chinese-looking, some no complained about the illnesses of their childre and teenagers sat day after day in the shade of a old stone lion. It had been at Condominios Mo

albán that a Mexican mother had compared
r country and my country thus: "Here we're
e. Over there they live like robots." We live like
bots; Chinese lived like cigarettes. And they
otected a vampire, and they *came out like ants.*
The people I met on the street didn't like the
inese; nor, it seemed, did many of the intelli-
ntsia, the journalists, or the archivists. A young
y I met, who had worked in a Chinese restau-
nt for five years, told me: "They come from far
ay from here, so their character is different
m ours, and it's bad. They don't share." I asked
m if he'd ever heard anything about tunnels?
lever," he said, "because these kinda people,
ey don't wanna talk to no one about their life."
white-haired, pleasant, round-faced lady named
pita, who had once worked in the office of a
ni company, had graduated to being a security
ard in a prostitute discotheque, and now held
ernoon duty as the moneytaker for a parking lot
iside a shut-down supermarket, allowed that her
orite aspect of Mexicali was her friends, and her
cond favorite was the Chinese food. Would she
nsider marrying a Chinese? I inquired. "No!
n not a racist, but no Chinese, no nigger!"

## "THEM DAMNED NAGURS"

Imperial, by which I mean not only the Impe-
l Valley but also that valley's continuation south
the border, is a boarded-up billiard arcade, white
d tan; Imperial is Calexico's rows of palms, flat
n sand, oleanders, and squarish buildings, name-
the Golden China Restaurant, Yum Yum Chi-
se Food, McDonald's, Mexican insurance; Im-
rial contains a photograph of a charred building
d a heap of dirt: *Planta Despepitadora de Algodón*
*hino-Mexicana."* Imperial is a map of the way to
alth, but the map has been sun-bleached back
blankness. Leave an opened newspaper outside
a month and step on it; the way it crumbles,
at's Imperial. Imperial is a Mexicali wall at twi-
ht: tan, crudely smoothed, and hot to the touch.
perial is a siltscape so featureless that every lit-
dip made by last century's flood gets a chris-
ning, even if the name is only X Wash. In spite
its wide, flat streets and buildings, Imperial is ac-
ally a mountain, Gold Mountain to be precise.
By 1849 word of the California gold rush had
ached China. Mr. Chung Ming got rich right
ay. Hearing the news, his friend Cheong Yum
shed to California and achieved equal success.
1852 twenty thousand Chinese, mostly Can-
nese,* made the journey to try their luck. A lit-
more than a decade later, there were twelve
ousand of them digging, blasting, mortaring,
and shoveling on the transcontinental railroad. *Wherever we put them we found them good,* reported a white magnate who happily paid them less than he did his Irishmen. The Irishmen noticed. One of them lamented: *Begad if it wasn't for them damned nagurs we would get $50 and not do half the work.*

"Chinamen" and Indians received preference for employment in the vineyards around Los Angeles, and in 1860 a contingent of white laborers gave up and departed for Texas. In 1876 a chronicle of Los Angeles reports this news: *City still rapidly improving. During June anti-Chinese meetings were the order of the day.* Those words were written a mere five years after the infamous Chinese Massacre.* In spite of the anti-Asian movement's best efforts, *An Illustrated History of Los Angeles County,* published in 1889, estimates that between two and three thousand Chinese walked the streets: *The Chinese are a prominent factor in the population of Los Angeles. . . . The Chinaman, as a rule, with occasional exceptions, is not desirable help in the household. On the ranch . . . he can be tolerated, when white men are not obtainable.*

Meanwhile, in 1898, the Britannica Company contracted with Mr. Ma You Yong to bring a thousand Chinese to Mexico for railroad work. A tunnel cave-in killed seventy-seven. And they kept right on, from Oaxaca all the way to Salinas Cruz and Jesús Carranza. Onlookers no doubt remarked that they live together like cigarettes. In the sixth year of their labors, Jack London published a bitterly logical little essay entitled "The Scab." *When a striker kills with a brick the man who has taken his place, he has no sense of wrong-doing. . . . Behind every brick thrown by the striker is the selfish will "to live" of himself, and the slightly altruistic will "to live" of his family.*

Under capitalism, continues London, we are all scabs, and we all hate scabs. But not everyone takes his reasoning that far. The Chinese coolie, whom London mentions in the same breath as the Caucasian professor who scabs by being meeker than his predecessor, was to haters of *damned nagurs* a dangerously particular case. You see, in California the Chinese do more than we, in exchange for less. In that case, we'd better make it hot for the Chinese. Hence anti-Chinese riots; hence the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and its many descendants.



*ccording to the owner of the Golden China R[illegible] 2003 this was still the case, although a number of Mex[illegible] i's Chinese also came from Shanghai.*

* *The way one county history tells it, two rival Chinese mobs fighting over a woman "on either side of Negro alley" began shooting at each other on 23 October 1871. On the following day, a policeman and two citizens who were doing what they could to bring peace got wounded in the crossfire; one citizen died. "The news of his death spread like wild-fire, and brought together a large crowd, composed principally of the lower class of Mexicans and the scum of the foreigners." The predictable result: lynchings, shootings, arson, pillaging. Nineteen Chinese were murdered. (Another source gives the casualty figure of a probably inflated seventy-two.)*



"The Scab" saw print the same year as Mexicali's founding. The Chinese were already there.

## THEY CAME FOR THE WORK

A soft-spoken old Chinese shoe-store owner at Altamirano and Juárez (who became less open with me once I started badgering him about tunnels) told me that his grandfather came in 1906 to pick cotton. He worked for an American company, but he couldn't remember the name. I suspect it was the Colorado River Land Company, which had already hired Mariano Ma. In later years he'd be seen at the racetrack with the governor of Baja California, but in 1903 he spent his days with Chang Peio and the other *braceros*, leveling roads, digging canals, all for a wage of fifty centavos (twenty-five additional for food); whether this was paid daily or weekly is not recorded. Señor Ma remarks: *In that place there were a lot of mosquitoes. Many people died on account of the various sicknesses caused by insect bites, rattlesnakes, and the intense heat. Some people were buried underground by quicksand and whirlwinds.*

The old Chinese-Mexican mestiza Carmen Jaham told it this way: *Mexicali began with about a hundred or a hundred and fifty Chinese.* And between 1902 and 1921, forty or fifty thousand Chinese came to Mexico. In 1913 there were a thousand in Mexicali alone. And they kept coming.

Steve Leung, the owner of a shop on Calle Altamirano, a middle-aged third-generation Chinese, told me that most of the Chinese workers who came here had been farmers. They saw the desert wasteland standing fallow and they cultivated it. Later, when the Mexicans started moving in, the Chinese ran grocery stores and laundries. They were successful with the groceries, but then the Mexicans started taking over that business, so the Chinese pulled back to restaurants. "Mexican people have not been able to take that over, since Chinese work longer hours," Mr. Leung said. "They don't fight with the local people; they let them come in; they just pull back."

And in my mind's eye, as Mr. Leung said this, I could see them pulling back into the tunnels. Whether or not his version of events correctly explains the facts, it certainly fits in with them, for the photo albums in the Archivo Histórico del Municipio de Mexicali do show an awful lot of Chinese grocery stores.

## "A HIGH-PITCHED VOICE WAS SCREAMING CHINESE ORDERS"

The historian Hubert H. Bancroft, whose many-volumed work on California is a monument nearly as eminent as the border wall, expresses his epoch when he tells us: *These people were truly, in every sense, aliens. The color of their skins, the repulsiveness of their features, their under-size of figure, their incomprehensible language, strange customs and heathen religion . . . conspired to set them apart.*

In around 1905 we find Mr. Hutchins, the Chinese inspector, carrying out his task at Jacumba, *which is to allow no unentitled Mongolian to cross from Mexico into the United States.* When he catches them, they're jailed and tried.

In one of Zane Grey's novels, published in 1913, a rancher on the Arizona side of Sonora explains to a cowboy that *of course, my job is to keep tab on Chinese and Japs trying to get into the U.S. from Magdalena Bay.* (That same year, the Colorado River Land Company imports another five hundred Chinese into Mexico from Hong Kong.)

In 2003 the man in the *casa de cambio* on First Street assured me in a gleeful murmur that of course there were tunnels *everywhere* in Calexico because if they started over *there* in Mexico then it stood to reason that they'd come up over *here*. He was Chinese. His building had three tunnel entrances, he said, but unfortunately he couldn't show them to me because they were closed. But he knew for a fact that the old building that now housed the Sam Ellis store had a tunnel. The kindly old proprietor of the latter establishment showed me photographs of the way the border used to be; he advised me to go to the Chamber of Commerce for an interpreter; as for the tunnel, every time I asked if I could just take a peek in his basement he didn't seem to hear me, but he did say: *You're never gonna find any of those tunnels.*

In 1925, Dashiell Hammett's crime story "Dead Yellow Women" envisions Chinese tunnels in San Francisco, all the while keeping faithful to the expectations of his public: *The passageway was solid and alive with stinking bodies. Hands and teeth began to take my clothes away from me. . . . A high-pitched voice was screaming Chinese orders. . . .* That was one passageway to alienness. In another, which the protagonist reached through a trap door, *the queen of something stood there! . . . A butterfly-shaped headdress decked with the loot of a dozen jewelry stores exaggerated her height.*

When Fu Manchu movies went out of fashion, new authentications of menacing alienness became available. Zulema Rashid, born in Calexico in 1945, remembers being scared every time she had to buy something in the Chinese store on Imperial Avenue *because the Chinese were Communists who tortured people.*

A fighting-cock breeder from near San Luis Río de Colorado, told me during a match in Las Agrarias that *of course the Chinese are out into slavery.* That was why one never saw any Chinese beggars. He got even more animated in the course of telling me that seven years ago the authorities had rounded up many illegal Chinese in Mexicali and sequestered them in a stadium under heavy guard, but some had my

riously escaped, an occurrence that he con-
lered both uncanny and hateful; he turned
tter when he mentioned it. He supposed that
ey had disappeared into one of their tunnels.

## "A *RAW* SMELL"

*They came out of the ground like ants.* So why
ouldn't there be tunnels? They exist, asserted
eatriz Limón, who was a reporter for *La Cróni-*
. She, however, had never seen one. One of her
lleagues had entered a tunnel with Chinese
ides, but the smell had been too terrible for
r—a *raw* smell, said Beatriz with distaste, a
ell like sewage.

Oscar Sanchez from the Archivo Histórico
oked up at me from behind his desk and said:



hey are there. But I can tell you nothing con-
ete. Originally they were there for shelter
m the heat, but then they started to install
e casinos. Oh, but it is difficult. These people
e very closed!"

Men said that there once had been tunnels
neath the dance hall Thirteen Negro, which
s whitewashed over its ancientness and cracked
rough its whitewash, doing business on and on
the center of the brick-fringed archways of ar-
des, lord of not quite closed sidewalk gratings,
th blackness beneath. Why wouldn't there be
nnels under the Thirteen Negro? And if they
*re* there, why wouldn't they still be there? But
e waiter denied it. What did his denial mean?
sked him how often he got Chinese customers
d he said every night. I asked him if he could
troduce me to a Chinese regular; maybe I could
y the man a drink. But the waiter said he
dn't want any trouble.

## THE TALE OF THE AIR DUCTS

My next tactic was to bang on Mexicali's near-
t prominently ideogrammed metal gate, and
that is how, ushered down a tree-shaded walkway and into a courtyard, I had the inestimable pleasure of meeting Professor Eduardo Auyón Gerardo of the Chinese Association Chung Shan.

This *world-renowned painter, known especially for his paintings of horses and nude women,* had a Chinese mother and a Mexican father. In 1960, when he was thirteen years old, his father brought him to Mexicali to join his grandmother.

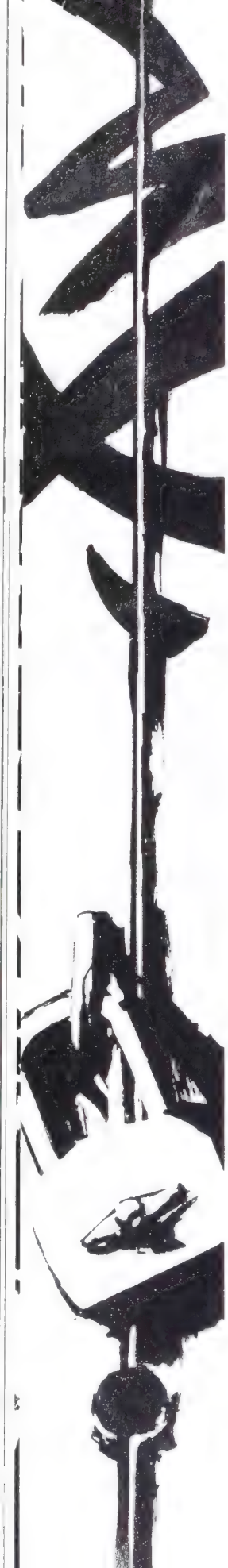
Mr. Auyón was not especially pleased to see me. He told me that I really should have made an appointment. In fact I'd banged on the gate two days ago and made an appointment through his nephew. This did not mollify the *world-renowned painter,* who sat unsmiling amidst his *sumi* paintings and brass lions. Well, to business: First he tried to sell me a gold-plated commemorative medallion, which he had designed. It was pretty but expensive. Then he offered me a dusty copy of his book, *El Dragón en el Desierto: Los Pioneros Chinos en Mexicali,* for the special price of thirty dollars. Comprehending that if I didn't buy something from him my interview would be terminated, I paid for *El Dragón en el Desierto,* after which he brightened slightly and began to relate snippets of Chinese-Mexican history.

I asked him if I could please meet a Chinese family.

It's very difficult, he explained, because my countrymen are not very communicative. But *El Dragón en el Desierto* does have ten chapters. You can read all about the Chinese in there. That was perfect. My research was now at an end. We agreed that if and only if I read his book thoroughly and maybe memorized it, then came back in a month, it was possible that he might have found a Chinese family to tell me something innocuous.

That point having been settled, I asked him about the Chinese tunnels. They don't exist, the world-renowned painter of horses assured me. The people couldn't survive in them if they did. They could not sleep. It would be too hot down there.





Just in case there were tunnels after all, Mr. Auyón, where do you think they might be

That heat, the body cannot resist and [illegible] he replied. In the nighttime one has to sleep. One has to live down there—that's why the snakes live underground—but in the summer it's too hot.

So there are no tunnels?

Every locality has tunnels like a house has cellar. There are businesses that have two or three

to take me into the Chinese tunnels, about whic[h] I had never heard. So he did research. It took hi[m] a day. He found me an underground casino th[at] would be possible to visit before opening time, b[ut] I had to promise not to talk to anyone, and I couldn't guarantee that I could take photograph[s]. When he saw that I really wanted to take pho[to]graphs, he said that he could work it ou[t]. Leonardo was the man, all right. Why shouldn[t]

**THEY WERE UP ALL NIGHT SMOKING AND GAMBLING. THEY WERE PLAYING *BARAJA* FOR A LOT OF MONEY. THAT HAPPENED IN THE TUNNELS. I'M SEVENTY-SIX AND I WAS BORN HERE**

branches. They have cellars and connections. On Juárez at Reforma, one man has seven businesses. Underneath, it looks like another city.

Could I see one of those cellars? He didn't think that that was possible. Then, looking into my face, and this was the one moment when I felt that he was actually being genuine with me, he said: Do you want to know the history of Mexicali? *Every ten acres, one Chinese died.*

I'm sorry, I said. He looked at his watch. The world-renowned medallionist had an important appointment.

I asked him if he could show me one of the cellars that he'd mentioned. He took me into the Hotel Chinesca next door and past the fancy lobby into the open-air courtyard giving onto tiny double-bedded rooms; and from a chambermaid he got the key to the cellar, which looked and smelled like a cellar. There he pointed to a "communication" passage in the corner of the wall. It was small and square and had a screen over it; it was, he said, an air duct. Inside it I could see light and stoneworked walls. A small child could have hidden there. Triumphantly, Mr. Auyón declared: This is what they call a tunnel.

## UNDER THE VOLLEYBALL COURT

So it went. I could tell you about my interview with the taxi driver who knew for a fact that a tunnel had once led from the Chinesca right across the border, but they closed it; or the tale of Leonardo, the "tour guide" from Tijuana who was down on his luck, so he followed me down the street at around midnight, trying to interest me in young girls. Did I want fifteen-year-olds? I did not. Well, then, he could get me twelve-year-olds. He could deliver them right to me if I went to the Hotel Mexico. He had a hatchet-shaped, smooth little face, and he was little and vicious. Since he could do anything (he'd already told me the story of how he'd obtained excellent false papers for *pollos* in T.J.), I told him

it be true? There'd been gaming houses in Mexicali since 1909. He described so well how it would be that I could almost see it. Soon a not was waiting for me at the Hotel Chinesca: the tou would cost me fifty dollars, and I had to pay in ad vance. Leonardo went first to give the password he'd be back in two minutes. I waited for him i the pitch-dark alley on the edge of the Río Nue vo; the moon resembled an orange darkly pitte by cyanide fumigation injury, and I waited an waited for admission to that splendid unde ground world that Leonardo ha promised me.

To my rescue came Professor Yolanda Sánch Ogás, lifelong resident of Mexicali (born i 1940), historian, anthropologist, and author *Bajo el Sol de Mexicali* and *A La Orilla del R Colorado: Los Cucapá*, both of which she sold m out of the closet of her house. The first time asked her about Chinese tunnels, she said th she didn't know anything about them but wou find out. The next time I saw her she calm said: I went into the tunnels. That entire area u der La Chinesca has a subterranean level. As f the casino, I know there was one, but right n I don't think so. But under the volleyball cou many *Chinos* live.

Have you seen them living there?

No, but I have heard. And I met an old m who lived all his life under Restaurant Ocho.

## RATS AND COCKROACHES

Next morning in Callejón Chinesca the pr prietors of the watch stores and clothing sto were already rolling up their gratings. We we looking for the Restaurant Jing Tung. Nobo in the street had ever heard of it. But that didn mean it wasn't there. Yolanda led us to th Hotel Cecil, which I'm told was the labor love of a Chinese named Cecil Chin. We we upstairs. Yolanda said that there had once be

tunnel with bars, casinos, and a restaurant.

This is all new, said the manager, gesturing ound him. When they constructed this hotel in )47, the tunnel was already there. There used to : an entrance on the first floor.

Can we go into the tunnel? I asked.

The manager wearily spread his hands. It's osed, he said. He didn't care to nourish any tyths.

Across the street from the Cecil, in another ofed passageway called Pasajes Prendes, there as an ancient barbershop whose owner's white air resembled his ribbed and whitewashed con- ete ceiling, and he said: No, you walked in from e street, and the restaurant was on the left by e bar, and it had really big chairs and a piano, id there was a man who played the piano. They ok the piano away many years ago. In the tun- l there was a store, and right here in front there as a butcher shop aboveground. The hotel was ished in April of '47, and there was nothing re before, he said, beaming through his round asses. Oh, he was happy, smiling, talking about e past.

So what's in the tunnels now? I asked.

Pure trash.

His single customer, who was tub-shaped, imed in: And rats!

Yolanda said nothing. I knew that she hated ts.

I went down there, said the customer, and it's trash. Rats, cockroaches, because of the hu- idity . . .

A woman over here had a store, said the bar- r. There is still an entrance over there, and it's ll of water. There was a cantina below. Cecil hin owned the cantina. The whole building, ere's tunnels all over the place. Anyone could in. It was public property.

Were there casinos below?

No, there were never any casinos.

I thought there was a casino under the Calle- n.

There could have been, said the barber happily. here was a barbershop, a shoe store, a bowling ley, pool tables . . .

I think there are some places where people get gether to play cards, said Yolanda.

The tubby man, who was a foreman, shrugged d said: There are tunnels all through here, and so on Juárez and Reforma. It's like a labyrinth.

As the fan slowly rotated along the edge of e mirror, they talked happily about the old days *hen they were all killing each other.*

Around '46 a lot of this was burned, said the rber. Slowly he reached up to turn on the aux- ary ceiling fan. The first of these buildings ught on fire, in '45 or '46, a lot of Chinese d. The second fire, nobody was inside. That was '91. That second fire was so big that they came from Calexico and El Centro to put it out. And by the way, it seems to me that there used to be a tunnel under the Hotel Imperial. There used to be a cantina . . .

There still is, but not underneath, said the fat man.

Were there ever any opium dens? I asked.

The barber said: I worked in the Hotel Cecil for six years. I started in '49 as a waiter. Then I became a manager of the laundry department. When I was up there washing clothes, I saw the Chinese people smoking opium. There was a basketball court, and under there were six or seven Chinese men with a big pipe, passing it around. The pipe was as long as my arm!

Another old man had come in to get his hair cut, and he said: Yeah, I was there then, too. They were up all night smoking and gambling. They were playing *baraja* for a lot of money. That happened in the tunnels. I am seventy-six, and I was born here.

Were there prostitutes in the tunnels?

No, that was above.

Did anyone live in the tunnels?

Over in this part, in the Chinesca, sure.

Can we see the place where the water is? I asked.

A woman named Inocencia has the key. I never had the key.

We thanked the barber and wished him good business. As he was saying goodbye to us, he remarked, very sadly: There really aren't any businesses here anymore. It's all boutiques. All the Americans come here to buy medicines.

And I knew that he would have loved to go back in time, even just for a day, to wander in the tunnels when they were crammed with life, glamour, commerce, and vice.

## MY FIRST TUNNEL

Near the Hotel Capri there was a certain clothing business owned by an elderly Mexican who knew Yolanda quite well. Behind the counter, next to the water closet, there was a metal door, which the man unlocked, inviting us into a concrete room, where clothes hung on a line. The man lifted up a trapdoor, and I saw stairs. Yolanda had her flashlight, and Terrie, my translator, was carrying the other flashlight, which we had bought an hour earlier for just this occasion. Smiling, the man stood aside.

Yolanda wanted me to go first, because she was afraid of the rats, so I did, and she came after me into that sweltering darkness, gamely half-smiling with her pale, sweat-drenched shirt unbuttoned almost to the breast and her head high and sweat shining on her cheekbones and sparkling in her short gray hair and her kind proud eyes alertly seeking just as the straight white beam of her





flashlight did, cutting through the darkness like a knife. Terrie's flashlight was very steady. Where were we? The humidity was almost incredible. Dirt and darkness, flaring pillars composed my immediate impression. I amber hues [illegible] as pale as bone piles under those twin beams of battery-powered light. I saw no rats. How stifling it was! Graffiti'd beams ran overhead, higher than I would have expected but still in arm's reach; and wire hangers with flaring underparts hung like the skeletal outlines of headless women. I glimpsed the folding X-frames of something, a table, and a metal wheel of protruding spokes. Beneath the heavy rectangular archways, the tunnel went on and on. Quite evidently it was much vaster than the store above it, even allowing for the fact that everything is always larger in darkness. Somewhere ahead of us, skeletal perspective lines approached one another palely within the ceiling darkness; the place where they lost themselves seemed to be a hundred feet away and was probably ten. I thought I could see a squarish passage. The floor was littered with trash, and broken chairs and empty cardboard boxes. Here gaped an open safe. I picked my way as carefully as I could; for all I knew, ahead of me there might be an uncovered well that would lead straight to death in cheesy black currents of the Río Nuevo, which, thank God, I couldn't smell at the moment. Yolanda and Terrie were out of sight; they were in other worlds; I could see only one or the other of their flashlight beams. I felt almost alone. Chamber after chamber went on, connected by squarish archways. A palish blotch on the black wall gazed at me; my mind was beginning its usual game of dreaming up faces. Drumming and music came down to me from somewhere up above. The old Mexican who owned the place had said that he thought there had been a casino down here, and when I heard that music I could almost imagine it.

It might well be that the quality of the tunnels that haunted so many of us was quite simply their *goneness*. When I imagine them, my ignorance allows them to be what they will. Before we knew how hot the surface of Venus is, we used to be able to write beautiful science-fiction stories of swamps and green-skinned Venusians. I could almost see myself descending the stairs into this place in the years when the electric lights still worked. Sometime between the first and second fires it might have been perfect down here. Having smoked opium in Thailand, I could imagine that one of these chambers might have had mats on the floor where I could have lain, watching the opium smoke rise sweetly from my pipe between inhalations. And from Thailand I also remembered Chinese men in black trousers, shiny black shoes, and white dress shirts; at an open-to-th street restaurant in Chinatown, with stainles steel tables and white tile walls, we were all drink ing delicious sweet chrysanthemum juice th color of urine, and the handsomest man of a leaned on his elbow and gazed dreamily over h crossed fingers. Was this how the Chinese woul have dressed when they went underground t drink, gamble, and womanize in Mexicali? C would they have possessed nothing but the roug cotton clothes of the *braceros?*

There might have been a piano player here there had been at Cecil Chin's, and when h paused to take a drink of Mexicali Beer, I woul have heard all around me the lovely bone-click of mah-jongg. One hot summer day in the Ch nese city of Nan-ning, I wandered through a par of lotus leaves and exotic flowers to a pagod where ancient women sat, drowsily, happily play ing mah-jongg amidst the scent of flowers, an that excellent sound of clicking tiles enchante me; I was far from home, but that long slow sum mer afternoon with the mah-jongg sounds brough me back to my own continent, and specifically t Mexicali, whose summer tranquillity never end

I remember a lady who smiled when she w dancing naked, a sweet smile of black eyes an glowing white teeth; she seemed so hopeful, so en thusiastic, so "sincere," if that word makes an sense between two strangers, and she was smilin right at me! She held my hand; that's right, sh held my hand all the way to the hotel; I kissed he plump red lips and sucked on them as much as wanted; she kissed me back. *Caliente!* the men i the street said approvingly. Afterward we walke hand in hand back to the dance hall, and all th men applauded. She was Mexican, not Chines and the place where she'd rented me her illusio of love lay several blocks beyond the edge of th Chinesca; all the same, it was she whom I no thought of in that tunnel whose revelry had turne to lumber and broken chairs; those click-clackin mah-jongg tiles in Nan-ning, the laughter an preposterously exaggerated moans of that prost tute, the sensations of opium intoxication in Tha land—these were the buried treasures that m flashlight beam sought in the Chinese tunnels Mexicali, my memories, my happy dissipation let's say my youth. No wonder I'd wanted to b lieve Leonardo the "tour guide"! Waiting for not ing in the hot thick night, with the ducklik quacking of a radio coming from one of the t walls of that alley, that evil sand-paved alley ove looking Condominios Montealbán, I was alread a citizen of this darkness; I was a spider luxurious centered in the silk web of my own fantasies.

## THE TUNNEL LETTERS

Next came the Restaurant Victoria, a tranq

ıradise of coolness and reliably bland food (the ong Cheng was better) where the waitresses ere the only ones who hurried; the customers, ho were mostly Mexican, lived out the hours ith their sombreros or baseball caps on, linger- g over their rice; here I had tried and failed on veral prior occasions to find out if there might any tunnels in the neighborhood. But it was st as my father always said, *it's not what you ıow, it's who you know,* and I knew Yolanda, ho happened to be here, and who knew Miguel, e Chinese owner, a slender youngish man with t-black hair who'd come here from Canton two ecades before. He led us through the restau- nt—white ceiling, white incandescent lights, hite tables, at one of which a fat old lady and a ung girl, both Chinese, sat slowly eating while e television emitted music that was sad and amatic and patriotically Mexican. The white alls gave way to pinkish bathroomlike tiles as we ssed beneath the rapidly whirling white fans and lmired from afar the Chinese-captioned paint- g of the red sun floating on a turquoise sea—and rough the swinging doors he led us, straight to the kitchen, where the Mexican cook and the hinese dishwasher goggled at us; turning right, e came into a long narrow courtyard and entered detached two-story building with what appeared be an ancestral shrine just within the entrance.

years old, maybe eighty. Since we were in the heart of the Chinesca, this tunnel would have possibly already been here but so what, and how could I possibly speculate anyhow? On my second visit to this tunnel I saw a few more traces of fire and I also found what might or might not have been a trapdoor in the concrete floor of the first chamber; it would not budge. In the dark room beneath some beds was a stack of bedframes. *Muchas prostitutas!* suggested one of my guides.

At the extreme end of the farthest room, another passageway had been bricked up. I asked Miguel how much it would cost me to have that obstruction broken down and then sealed up again when I had seen whatever there was to see. Smiling, he replied that there was no need for that; all I had to do was ask the pastor of the Sinai Christian Center down the street to let me into *his* tunnel.

When we turned back to the middle chamber we saw a desk, and we approached it without any great expectations since it was not so many steps away from the entrance to this place; all we had to do was turn around and we could see the supernaturally bright daylight of Mexicali burning down into the stairwell. I remember that a spiderweb as wide as a hammock hung on the wall; I remember how dismally humid it was in that place; I could almost believe Mr. Auyón, who'd

**THE ROLLTOP DESK LAY A HOARD OF LETTERS, SOME OF THEM RAT-GNAWED, ALL OF THEM SMELLY, MOLDY, AND SPIDERWEBBED. THEY HAD EN CRAMMED INTO THE BLACKENED DRAWERS FOR WHO KNOWS HOW LONG.**

) the right, next to a shopping cart full of stale ırned bread and a hand mill to grind the bread flour for gravy, wide stairs descended.

This tunnel was less dark, uncluttered, and ore self-contained. Indeed, it disappointed me first; it appeared to be little more than a con- ete cellar. Then I noticed that a five-socketed ıandelier crouched on the ceiling like a pot- llied spider, four of its sockets encased in ornate ıral doughnuts, the fifth a bare metal bell. The iling itself was comprised of fancy-edged blocks e parquet flooring. But some blocks were stained charred and some were moldy and some were ıtirely missing, leaving rectangles of darkness ering down from behind the rafters. It was a ıde chamber that could have held many people, pecially if they'd lived together like cigarettes. 'hat had they done here? Had they gambled or nply banqueted? Had this place been an opium n? A tub held old Chinese porcelain bowls th floral designs. Then there were several dark ıd empty side-chambers.

The Victoria was in Miguel's estimation sixty

claimed that of course the Chinese never lived underground, because that would have been too uncomfortable. In other words, I couldn't help but assume this desk to be a counterpart of the first tunnel's Sentry model 1230 safe, which sat upon the skeleton of a table that might once have had a glass top, lording it over broken beams and pipe lengths. Dust and filth speckled the top of the safe; behind rose a partly charred concrete wall. The door gaped open. Inside was nothing but dirt.

But as it turned out, under the Restaurant Victoria, in that rolltop desk with a writing surface of wood slats now beginning to warp away from one another just enough to let the darkness in between them, lay a hoard of letters, some of them rat-gnawed, all of them smelly, moldy, and spiderwebbed. Yolanda Ogás was standing against the wall whose pale sea-waves of stains were as fanciful as the serpent plumes of painted Chinese dragons; Miguel bent over the desk, fingering the old letters that had been crammed into blackened drawers for who knows how long. The darkness was hot, wet,





and slightly rotten. Then he [illegible] away with indifference.

Miguel was a nice [illegible] mission to borrow the letters. When I [illegible] with him upstairs, in the richly glowing shade of the Restaurant Victoria, looking out through the lingerie-translucent curtains and the double glass doors with the red ideograms on them, the white rectangles of the street walls, and dried-blood-colored gratings of other Chinese businesses, the world one-third occluded by angle-parked cars and trucks, I found that he didn't want to talk, because he'd only been here for twenty years, which, he reminded me, *wasn't long enough to voice an opinion*. He referred us to the Chinese Association. There were actually either twenty-six or twenty-eight of those, but he meant the Chinese Association whose head was a certain Mr. Auyón.

The tunnel letters brought to life the time when there was light in the partly stripped chandelier, when that ceiling whose fanciness has long since been gutted into occasional waffle-pits of darkness was still whole, when the stacked tables were still laid out for reading, drinking, arguing, and gambling, a time before the walls were stained and the ceiling squares dangled down like laundry on the line. Here is one, an undated message from a wife in China to her husband in Mexico; perhaps he brought it downstairs to ask his Tong brothers what he could possibly do:

> *Everything goes well at home, except that my father-in-law cannot understand why there is [illegible]. Father-in-law questioned money sent [illegible] Rong-Shi, and Rong-Shi denied receiving money. We borrowed money from neighbors. Father-in-law is not in good health. Please send money home. Also, when you send money home, do not send money [illegible]. Send the addressed to . . .*

## DAYS OF IVORY

*I've never really heard about the tunnels. Th tunnels don't exist*. Meanwhile, I kept going int tunnels. Half a dozen times I had the experi ence of descending below a Mexican-owne boutique or pharmacy, asking the owner wher another tunnel might be, getting referred to thi or that shop a door or three away, going to thi or that shop's proprietor, and being told: Ther are no tunnels here. Sometimes they'd say There is a tunnel but I don't have a key. Th boss has the key. How long are you here until Tuesday? Well, the boss will be in San Dieg until Tuesday. One lady assured me that th tunnels were a myth; another said that he establishment's tunnel was being rented out as storage space and she didn't have the key; third, who'd operated her business in th Chinesca for twenty-two years, assured me tha there had never been any tunnels in th Chinesca. Of course, with every passing yea the tunnels did come that much closer to a stat of nonexistence. Restaurant Nineteen, one o the oldest in Mexicali, was abandoned half decade ago and in the early summer of 2003 ha already been for three months reincarnated as



pool hall, with blue-felted billiard table imported from Belgium. The Mexican owne who wore blue to match his tables, was actuall less interested in billiards than in carambol which employs only three balls. He'd bough the building outright from the Chinese. He' remodeled extensively and knew that there ha never been any tunnels. I asked if I could visi his basement, but he didn't hear me. I aske again but he still didn't hear me. Yolanda Ogá Beatriz Limón, and José Lopez from Jalisco wer

:re; we each ordered a Clamato juice with
l clams in it, and when he brought me the
l (I was the gringo; I always paid) it came to
rty-five dollars. He had one young Chinese
:tomer who came to play; perhaps through
n I could reach his father. The big fire? Yes,
eryone still talked about that. He believed
ıt it had happened in 1985; that had been
en *those Chinese came running everywhere;* he
in't know where they'd run from. He couldn't
e less about the past, except in one respect:
sighed for the days when cue balls were still
lde out of real ivory.

*Dear Ging Gei. In response to your letter, we under-*
*stand your situation. I asked Bak Gei to go to Wong Gei*
*for the money Bak Gei had asked for to lend his friend*
*for medical bills since Wong Gei owes your brother Bak*
*Gei money. If you do not know who Wong Gei is, please*
*go to Chung Wei for further clarification.* —*1924*

## CREATION MYTHS

Do you want to know how they started?
ıare Ng told me how she and her daughter
s went down to Condominios Montealbán
I had asked them to do, trying to find tunnels
ıat least to ask about tunnels, and she told it
e this: *It was nighttime, and it was that big*
*ırtment down there, and we saw some Chinese*
*man who was fetching water for the vegetables*
*wn there, and in the beginning she was scared to*
*e. The husband has been there for ten years and*
*has been there only for three years. I asked how*
*you like it, and she said just since my husband*
*ere I like it; that is the only reason. The daugh-*
*does not speak Spanish yet. So we were there,*
*l they opened their hearts. They told us it was*
*ny many years ago, and too hot. These Chinese*
*ple cannot take the heat, so they decide to live*
*derground in the tunnel. There was a big fire,*
*l everything was burned. They don't live there*
*ymore, but they still keep some things there.*
*ey say there's still a casino down there. Maybe*
*s kind of secret.*

That was one version. But since Chinese tun-
s are involved, no version is definitive. When
ked Steve Leung where the tunnels had come
m, he first advised me to meet a certain Pro-
sor Auyón, then, when I continued to question
n, he said that "mainly they was made by the
xicans, actually." The Mexicans had made
tunnels. Mr. Leung said the Mexicans had
ied the Chinese, who dug tunnels to smuggle
ir people across the border, and made tunnels
smuggling drugs. Mr. Leung said that the Chi-
e at one time had casinos underground but that
y were closed because of pressure from the
xican government. *It is still a corrupt govern-*
*nt, definitely, but it is more elegant now; it used*
*to be you didn't need much connection as long as you got the money. Now you need the connection too.*

## WOMEN ON BLACK VELVET

I remember tunnels that pretended to be cellars, and real cellars, and other tunnels of various sorts. I remember a plywood door partially ajar with two blood-dark ideograms painted on it, a hasp, a slender padlock. I remember cylindrical holes in the floor with locking hatch covers; these were the old Chinese safes. I remember how the palings of one tunnel wall resembled bamboo poles packed together, and around the top of them ran a stained metal collar. Then over a gap hung a torn ceiling, with strings and wires dangling down. The floor was a forest of paint buckets, toilets without tanks, cardboard, and upended chairs.

Late in the evening the sun caught the orangeness on the backward Restaurant Victoria lettering on the white window curtains, and the pleats of the curtains began sweating yellow and gold. A man on a crutch slowly hobbled out, and a boy held the door for him. For a long time I could see him creeping along outside, with backward Chinese lettering superimposed across his journey. The girls were already working across the street in the doorway of the Hotel Nuevo Pacifico; I counted six of them. Señor Daniel Avila, who'd worked at a certain supermarket for forty years and now owned a butcher shop, said that his son had once clerked at the Pacifico and that he had found tunnels but was never allowed to go inside them.

In your opinion, what is down there? I asked him.

He laughed and said: Secrets.

He took me down into his snow-white cellar tunnels, which had once been Chinese tunnels, and assured me that in a tunnel that had once connected with the tunnels under the supermarket and perhaps still did, there had been a cantina with paintings of naked women on black velvet; he knew for a fact that the paintings were still there, though he wasn't sure what condition they might be in. He was positive that the Chinese still lived underground just across the street. He couldn't say exactly where their tunnel was, because they entered at night *like rats.*

In that wonderfully Mexican way he had, he made everything seem possible; any time now I was going to descend through the floor of a pharmacy or watch-repair store and hear piano music; I'd smell opium; I'd hear laughter and the click of mah-jongg tiles.

He knew a woman who trusted him and who could help me, but the next time I saw him he was more doubtful, and the time after that he was in a hurry to go to the cemetery for the Day of the Dead.





## A CHINESE LIVED AND DIED HERE

To the supermarket that Daniel Wong had mentioned there sometimes comes a Mexican caretaker who requested that I not use his name. He had worked long and faithfully for the Chinese owner, who had recently died in Taiwan, whose memory he adored. The children did not care to operate it anymore, and goods sat decaying on the shelves. Really it was no supermarket anymore but the shell of a supermarket. His role was to air the place out. He proudly said: This is one of the first stores that the Chinese opened in Mexicali.

After some persuasion the Mexican took me inside and through the double red curtains to the back, past an elevator cage (one of the first elevators in Mexicali, he announced loyally), and then we went downstairs into a white corridor. He said to me: This passageway originally went all the way to the cathedral on Reforma.

Aboveground it would have been a good fifteen-minute walk to that cathedral.

With his hand on his hip, thinking for a while amidst the humming electric whine of the lights, he finally said that the last time any Chinese had lived down here was in 1975.

Why did they stay in the tunnels?

They didn't have their papers, so they hid here. Around 1970 was the big fire. A lot of them came out, *with long beards!* I saw them. All old people! Many went back to China.

He pointed down into a cylindrical hole like many that I had seen in other tunnels, and he said: The Chinese didn't keep their money in the bank but in the wall. Here you would have had a safe, but it is full of water.

The tunnel went on and on, wide and humid, with salt-white stains on the walls. Huge beams spanned the ceiling. It was very well made.

Pointing to a square tunnel that went upward into darkness, he said: An emergency exit. This is how they came out during the fire.

I asked him why robbers and gangsters didn't live down here. He said it was because Mexicans are kind of timid. They think there are ghosts here. I have been working with the Chinese since I was twenty-seven. Now I am sixty. I myself believe in ghosts.

We reentered one of the middle chambers. The floor was stained white. The Mexican said the Chinese had slept in rows on small wooden beds. I asked if I could see one of the tunnels where they slept. All that has disappeared, he said. Then he took me upstairs to the boss's office.

The fire started with a man who sold tamales, the Mexican was saying. It burned up to here, and he pointed off the edge of the roof. This whole street was cantinas back in 1955. There was a lot of conflict, delinquency, prostitution. It was like an old cowboy town, he said longing.

I asked him again to show me the cantina where the velvet paintings are. And so he took me to the street behind the supermarket, in an alley I saw a narrow dark place that smelled of the R[illegible] sues and of buds, and on the far side of this there was a wall in which was set a white grating; when the Mexican unlocked this, the recess within was square, and within that stood another door. He had to go back to the supermarket to find the right key ring for that one. Laughingly he said: The Chinese have a lot of doors and a lot of keys.

This was all a cantina, he added with a sudden sadness. Pedro Infante sang here. Like Frank Sinatra.

He unlocked the inner door and pulled it open, a task that took most of his strength. Here at street level ran a very dark high-ceilinged space that seemed to have been gutted or perhaps was never finished; there were many wooden pallets, and he explained that illegal things had been stored here. What kind of illegal things? I wanted to know. Oh, butter and rice, he said hastily.

Dark stairs led down into black water; that was the cantina where the black-velvet paintings were. He said that it would take three weeks to pump it out, and he wasn't sure about the price. Three weeks later I was back, and he said that the pump had broken; he stood frowning with folded arms and said that the old Chino who would have shown me more had refused; I could tell that he wanted me to go away and never come back. But that was three weeks later; right now we still had an everlasting friendship ahead of us, and so after the flashlight finished glimmering on the stinking black tunnel in the cantina of the velvet paintings he took me up a crazy flight of wooden steps through the darkness to a concrete cell with three windows that looked down into that chamber of illegal butter and rice.

A Chinese lived and died here, he said.

There had been a stove, he told me, but the stove was gone. The dresser was still there. The bed was gone.

It was a ghastly, lonely place.

He was silent for a while. The place was so hot and humid that it was difficult to breathe. The Mexican said slowly: Our race is like Italians. We like to party. But they are very strange. Look down and you can see that tunnel; it's full of water . . .

Where does it go?

They say that that one also goes to the cathedral, but I don't know.

We descended the stairs, happy to get out of that eerie place, and we went back out to the street, and he locked the inner door and the outer door. In the doorway of the abandoned supermarket he said: When I started working here, fifteen or twenty people lived below.

You mean, where you first took me?

Yes. They never left.
He pointed to another building and said: When
e fire came, this is where the Chinese came
t, the old ones with the beards . . .

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE CHINESCA

Once upon a time in the Chinesca I peered in
rough the closed cracked window of the store
at sold sombreros; there was supposed to be a
nnel underneath, but the owner had assured
landa and me that he'd never heard of anything
e that. I looked in and
erything was dim; how
d I advanced my knowl-
ge of tunnels? Now it was
eady six-thirty, and a few
ps from me the fat lady
s locking the white-
inted, dirt-tinted gates of
oofed alley for the night.
veet dreams to the store
at sold communion dress-



A pleasant rest to the
bershop! There went the white number ninety-
ne bus, crowded with standees; a man wheeled
olly load of boxes down the gray sidewalk; a fe-
ale radio voice was babbling cheerily from a
re, and beneath that Mexican *carníceria*, which
s very old, there presumably lay secrets dormant
active.
There was the old, low Restaurant Dong
heng (Comida China Mexicana), where from
ne to time for half a dozen years now I've
opped in to get a beer or a half-order of fried
e, which was always as comfortingly large as
at lady's breast. No matter how hungry I was,
was inexhaustible. Then a white fence
etched across a vacant lot, a palm tree be-
ad; there was a parking lot, more Chinese
staurants, the Hotel Nuevo Pacifico, which is
ned for its beautiful whores, many of whom are
hinese or half-Chinese; this was the Chinesca.
Once upon a time, in a certain street whose
me I have already mentioned, not far from the
n where it said BILLARES and JAGUAR and un-
prisingly near to the ironwork letters that
elled out CHEE HOW OAK TIN, there was a gate,
d a Mexican woman pointed to it and said to
: All the Chinese go there.
Do you think I can go inside?
They won't let you.
Why?
She shrugged. Who knows? A lot of Chinese
me out of there to work. At night they come
ck here. Everybody says they live underground.
We were nearly at the basketball court, which
s also the volleyball court that Yolanda had told
: was the place beneath which the Chinese
posedly lived.

Every day that I passed by, I glanced at the CHEE HOW OAK TIN gate, but it was always closed until one morning in November when it wasn't; nakedly interpreter-less, I went in, and there was a Mexican standing in the courtyard. I gave him twenty dollars and said to him: *Por favor, señor, dónde está un subterráneo?* He laughed at me. He could speak English perfectly well. He told me not to tell anyone his name or where the tunnel was, but he could let me know that it was less than three doors from there. And it wasn't even a real *subterráneo*, only a *sótano*, a cellar, on whose floor a man in a blanket was sleeping; he was old and Chinese and might have been drunk; he did have a beard, though not as long as in the Mexicans' stories; a bag of clothes lay beside him; perhaps I should have photographed him, but it didn't seem very nice to steal a picture of a sleeping man. It all happened in a moment. Now I knew at least that people still slept in the tunnels; the myths were true; there remained secrets and subterranean passages, just as there used to be once upon a time in the Chinesca.

## THE RED HANDPRINTS

Smiling a little grimly or more probably just anxiously, the Mexican girl held the candle jar out before her. From an oval decal on the side of this light, the Virgin of Guadalupe protected her. Although her family had owned the boutique overhead for several years, she had never dared to go down here, because of her fear of ghosts. Behind her, the other girl struck a match; a whitish-yellow glob of light suddenly hurt my eyes. I looked up and glimpsed a far-away ceiling's parallel beams, which might have been wood or concrete. Then the match went out. I went down and down. Suddenly the flashlight picked out something shiny-black: water. I thought then that it might be impossible to explore that tunnel, that the water might be ten feet deep or more When I was in high school in Indiana I'd once gone spelunking with some friends in a cave that required several hundred feet of belly-crawl with our noses almost in the mud and the backs of our heads grazing against rock; sometimes when it rained, fools like us were trapped and drowned. As I peered down into that Chinese tunnel, the feelings that I had had in that cave came back to me. And yet when I'd reached the bottom step and the flashlight split the darkness a trifle deeper, I could already see pale islands of dryness. Moreover, the floor appeared to be flat. So





I stepped down into the wetness, and it came nowhere near the top of my shoe. Another step and another; that black water could have been a hundred miles deep the way it looked. But so far it wasn't. As always, my concern was that there might be a deep pit I couldn't see. I remembered helping a man from the Hudson's Bay Company drag a boat across weak sea-ice, which broke under me without warning. That was how I took my first swim in the Arctic Ocean. This memory proved as inapplicable as the first. With pettish, trifling steps I made my way, and presently so did the others. Soon the flashlight picked out the end of the pool; aside from a snake of darkness that narrowed and dwindled like the Colorado River, the rest of that tunnel was dry.

We were under Avenida Reforma. The two dark-haired *mejicanas* said they believed that Chinese had lived in this wide, high-ceilinged chamber. Always that pair stayed close together, often forming a right angle as they gazed or tried to gaze at something, usually close to the wall, whose blocks rewarded their candle's nourishment with paleness. Behind the stairs were three more huge rooms. At the end of the farthest, diagonal bars blocked us from the darkness's continuation.

The two *mejicanas* said that they thought this tunnel went all the way to the Restaurant Victoria, which would have been several city blocks from here. Shuffling with my careful old man's steps, I came across a mysterious square well of black water that might have been one foot deep or a hundred. Had I been a drainage engineer I might have known what it was. Instead, I thought of Edgar Allan Poe.

The older girl, whose name was Karina, shyly said she'd heard that at one time people tried to kill the Chinese, so they came down here and hid. The other girl had already begun to feel nervous and declined to tell me her name.

Each concrete pillar in every niche had many shelves of dark spiderwebs. Receding rectangular arches of paleness made me feel as if I were inside some monster's rib cage. Perhaps everything was reinforced so well on account of earthquakes.

In the large chamber immediately under the stairs we discovered an odd cabinet that was really a thick hollow wooden beam subdivided into shelves and compartments, with empty darkness above and below its dust—no, it actually had three sides, which went from floor to ceiling; it was simply that some of the back's slats had been pried off; on the back, in a niche whose ceiling was pegboard, someone had taped three pictures of space shuttles beside an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who presided with clasped hands and almost-closed eyes over the two plastic flowers that her admirer had also taped to that wall; and [illegible] below the cabinet the Chinese tunnel went [illegible] was barren bricked-up end.

The nameless woman had already gone almost to the top of the stairs, and my flashlight caught the impossibly white cylinders of her ankles almost out of sight, while Karina, holding the candle, stood sideways on two steps, gazing at me with her dark eyes. Her wet sandal prints on the stairs were almost as dark as her eyes. I remember her standing there and looking at me, looking at the darkness I remained in, and I will always wonder what she was thinking. Then she ascended the stairs and was gone.

I returned to that framework of bars from floor to ceiling; the tunnel kept going, but only rats and water could get through. Then I searched the niche behind the stairs.

On one whitewashed wall the flashlight suddenly picked out human handprints made in red. At first I thought it might be blood, but an experiment made with the rusty water on the floor proved that these handprints were part of a far less sinister game. Dashiell Hammett never wrote this.

The question of how vast the tunnels had been and still were preoccupied me. Old photographs seem to tell us how far they could have extended: In 1925, for instance, when Mexicali finally got its Chinese consulate, Avenida Reforma resembled a long, wide, well-ploughed field of dirt with little square wooden houses going up behind a rail fence; Avenida Madero was much the same. How could there have been any subterranean passages here? But evidently these views must have been taken far from the heart of things, perhaps even as far as the future cathedral on Reforma; for here's a vista of the *edificio ubicado* on Reforma at Azueta *en zona "la chinesca," circa 1920:* a sign for the Mexicali Cabaret, pricked out in lightbulbs or wires, rises into the dirty white sky above a two-story corner block of solid brick, fronted by squarish-arched arcades. Why *wouldn't* there have been Chinese tunnels there? Here's Chinese New Year, 1921: Two young boys uniformed like soldiers or policemen, clasp hands atop a great float upon whose faded legend I can just barely make out the word CHINA; flowers, perhaps made of paper, bestrew the scene; behind them comes another float like a tall rectangular sail; an automobile's round blank eye shine beneath it; a crowd of Chinese men and boys, their faces washed out by sun and time, gaze at us; everything is frozen, grainy, blurry, lost. Where are they? I don't know. And however many tunnels I ultimately entered, I would never be able to learn how many more remained. I tried to shine my feeble light as deep down into the past as I could, but I couldn't even see the bottom step of the tunnel's entrance.

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# DYING FOR DOLLARS

## Are you ready for the Iraqi gold rush?

*By Bryan Mealer*



The man from the Army takes the stage of the Emperors Ballroom and scans the faces of the potential recruits. Three hundred pairs of eyes stare back, hungry and eager to know. We sit behind rows of conference tables, sipping coffee out of paper cups. The overhead chandeliers bathe us in a golden light. The Army man sees a room of empty holes waiting to be filled.

It's early June at Caesars Palace, in Las Vegas, and the government is getting us up to speed on how to partic pate in the glorious rebuilding of Ira It's one of many stops on a worldwi tour, in which bureaucratic evangeli from the Commerce Department a the U.S. Army spread the good ne about what Uncle Sam is doing in t Babylonian desert and the myriad wa

*Bryan Mealer's last article for* Harper's Magazine, *"In the Valley of the Gun," appeared in the May issue.*



Illustration by Ralph Steadm

which the Coalition is dishing out 8.4 billion in reconstruction funds to od folks like you and me.

The Vegas conference, located on e fourth floor of the Palace Tower, is osted by the Army Small Business ffice, and it has attracted several hun-ed business owners from every in-istry. Executives from Halliburton, rsons Corporation, Perini Corpora-on, Lucent Technologies, Contrack ternational, FluorAMEC, and Wash-gton Group International—some of e major "prime" contractors currently orking in Iraq—will give elaborate esentations on how to compete for ultimillion-dollar subcontracts with eir companies. There are slide shows d Q&As throughout the day and, at ght, dancing girls in the Shadow Bar d 3-for-1 slots.

The man from the Army is Mark mer, chief of civilian contracts, and flew all night just to explain the al story in Iraq. Lumer's gray beard is ld and his suit swallows him like a h, but his eyes are sharp and probe the ettle in our souls. Where there are rk patches of ignorance and doubt, mer replaces them with the Truth d the Way. All we have to do is lis-n and believe. The story goes some-ing like this:

*ght now it is a new day in Iraq. Right w, friends, Iraq is being delivered from enty-five years of slavery. Iraq is an fant and we are teaching it how to walk. istory will not judge us as mere occupiers t as compassionate liberators and good maritans, swift merchants of hope and e rule of law. Right now in Iraq, Amer-a is in the Quality of Life business. The nerican people have given Iraq a gift $18.4 billion to rebuild the highways, spitals, electricity grid, communications tworks, law and justice systems, as well provide clean drinking water and a odern oil infrastructure. Why, you ask, ould we rebuild Iraq? Because it's the ht thing to do. Because an Iraq that is aceful and prosperous will no longer se a threat to its neighbors, to the region, d to America. An Iraq that is peaceful ll make money, and when people make oney, they no longer want to kill you.*

Lumer says Congress has ensured at a portion of the reconstruction oney will go to American small businesses, which have already won more than $500 million in contracts, and that's just the beginning. American prime contractors and their subs are currently rebuilding military bases, hydroelectric plants, transmission towers, along with scores of other projects. But since the government is in the business of helping Iraq help itself, he says, 77 percent of the contracts have gone to Iraqi firms.

The work we're doing is historic in scale. In a matter of months, he says, Iraq will have over 6,000 megawatts of electricity. Sewage and water lines will exist in every major city for the first time in its 6,000-year history. America, he says, has renovated 1,500 schools, hundreds of hospitals, and enabled over 400,000 people to have telephones in their homes. America has already put new textbooks in the schools that portray history as it really happened. But make no mistake: the new textbooks do not talk about Saddam's glorious reign. And for the sake of the kids, we've avoided mentioning the half-million bodies we found buried in the sand, and the individual cases of abuse and torture that would horrify anyone sitting here in the Emperors Ballroom.

"I'll tell you a quick story about an Iraqi policeman whose eight-year-old son was executed," he says. "He was joking with a buddy of his in school one day and said he could run the country better than Saddam. These were the days of Saddam's secret police. The next day a group of them came into the school, grabbed the kid, took him out into the courtyard, and shot him in the head. His eight-year-old son, killed for treason."

The Emperors Ballroom gasps.

"This is the kind of evil we've encountered across the board," he says. "But we're going to fix that."

Lumer leans heavily against the podium and pushes back his glasses. "I'll tell you, we in this room are doing God's work—for a noble cause, helping these people who have suffered, and I'm proud to be here."

There's a roar of applause, and afterward a microphone is placed in the back of the room for questions.

An Iraqi man steps up to the microphone, states his name, and says he represents many Iraqi firms in Baghdad. How much hard cash, he wonders, are Iraqi firms actually getting from having 77 percent of the contracts?

Lumer says he doesn't have an exact figure, but it is "tens and tens of millions."

"Hmm," says the Iraqi man. "So out of the billions and billions, it's really only a trickle."

Lumer is exasperated. "Yes, it's only a trickle," he says. "But remember, if an Iraqi businessman makes $15 a day, he thinks he's rich."

Outside in the Emperors Foyer, cute and perky Army girls in matching shorts and T-shirts make sure everyone is on the up-and-up. They hand out name tags, along with handsome information packets with a set of crosshairs on the cover. During a break, the foyer fills with people looking to meet and greet. Two camps quickly establish themselves—the eager tenderfoots hoping to land a lucrative contract, and those already working in Iraq and looking for more. The latter are cagey, grizzled men with deep suntans and a tomcat look in their eyes. They stand by the wall of windows, lighting one cigarette off another, gazing down onto the Garden of the Gods pool, where bikini girls are already out catching the morning Nevada sun.

The foyer is the green room for the casting call, where any supporting role in the Great Project can establish a person's career for life. It's where Judy Ritter from New Jersey hopes to pitch her engineering consulting firm, where Christine Bierman from St. Louis looks to sell her line of chemical suits and gas masks. One man owns a small airplane and wants to fly people in and out of hot spots; there are men who sell mobile dental vans, medical-waste incinerators, waterless showers for soldiers, and a broad range of plastic trash bins. They're guys like Frank Besson, a Vietnam vet who came all the way from Middleburg, Virginia, to sell his wondrous GreenMachine, a portable invention that takes common dirt and makes bricks capable of withstanding shrapnel and AK-47 fire.

And when the break is over, the hopeful recruits file back into the Emperors Ballroom, and the govern-

ment sends up a battery of disciples to preach how the free market will drive democracy in Iraq, and how the private sector must lead the way. A tall woman in a sharp business suit from the Army Corps of Engineers talks about "being on the front lines of freedom," comparing the Great Project in Iraq to our own Reconstruction after the bloody Civil War. She then invokes the words of Abraham Lincoln: "With malice toward none, with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in . . ."

The man from the Commerce Department is up next. He has a boyish grin, good hair, and looks like a Chippendale dancer. He comes in strong with the stump speech of the conference, the rallying cry of the New Gold Rush. Uncle Sam is standing like a giant Moses on the mountaintop, and this is what he sees. The vision speech is repeated in every conference in every city.

*Iraq is not a poor country but a country made poor by decades of tyranny, mismanagement, and evil. Iraq has the second-largest oil reserves in the world, the largest abundance of water in the region, and enough fertile, farmable land to one day become the breadbasket of the Middle East. But we are only talking about what's belowground. Aboveground there are 25 million passionate and talented people who are ready to embrace the American Dream. They are desperate to learn our way of business, eager to roll up their sleeves and work for the first time in their lives.*

*But more than anything, the Iraqi people want to buy things. Iraqis are demanding everything from satellite dishes and cell phones to soccer balls and tub grinders. Iraq is by far the largest emerging market of our time, and American businesses must meet the challenge. If it sells in Beaumont, it will sell in Basra. So don't languish. Decide you are not going to miss this investment opportunity of a lifetime. Decide your challenge will not be whether you go but when and how you go. When our great objective is achieved in Iraq, you will be able to say you were in on the ground floor, that you were part of the winning team.*

Out of the 300 people attending the Las Vegas conference, only about half wish to actually travel to Iraq and do business. The others are looking to sell their products or services to primes, or to Iraqi firms, from the comfort and safety of home. Whatever their plan, security plays a major role in its success, and many question if the government is painting a realistic picture of the dangers. The Vegas conference takes place three weeks after civilian contractor Nicholas Berg was kidnapped and beheaded on film by his Iraqi captors. The men and women in the Emperors Ballroom cannot help but see themselves in those images, and to help alleviate their fears the government has sent in Brigadier General Tony Hunter-Choat.

Hunter-Choat was head of security for the Coalition Provisional Authority, a retired officer in the British Special Forces who ran security for His Highness the Aga Khan and the Sultan of Oman. He is a buttoned-up Brit who stands straight as a fence and whose mouth hardly moves when speaking. He spares everyone the rosy picture and immediately cuts to the bone.

"First thing to tell you about Iraq is that it's dangerous," says Hunter-Choat. "Having said that, Iraq is a country with a superb future. The people are charming, entrepreneurial, very industrious, helpful, and kind. Of course I'm excluding those who are shooting at you and bombing you."

The General reminds everyone that the insurgents committing crimes against Americans in Iraq are a small minority. These people are rejectionists. They're rejecting democracy, capitalism, freedom of choice, and peace and prosperity for the Iraqi people.

*Before you travel to Iraq, you need to know where these rejectionist elements are. You need to be prudent and have an exit strategy like in any other country. Do not check your common sense at the border. As long as you are prudent and sensible, you will make it home. There are 20,000 American contractors doing good work in Iraq, but the only ones who make the evening news are the ones who die. People die all the time. Danger is relative. Would you walk alone in Detroit at nig wearing a gold watch? Of course no Iraq is no different. If the evening ne aired the grisly footage of every car ac dent in your town, do you think you still want to drive? The answer is no.*

Hunter-Choat said the civili contractors who are being target are those working closely with Coa tion soldiers and Iraqi police. If y work outside those parameters, si ple prudence will keep you safe. M who get themselves kidnapped a killed are men who ignore procedu and operate outside the lines. Th became too comfortable, and gr soft and careless. Men like Nick Be simply strayed from the program.

"There has been no identifiabl specific threat against Western exp triate contractors," said Hunte Choat. "And there is no indicatio there is going to be."

*Heed the message: if you're in Iraq a find yourself being bombed or shot a look around—it could be a result of t company you keep. Or worse, you ha strayed from the program.*

The best way to become a sub contractor in Iraq is to apply onlin at the website of a prime who h recently been granted a major co tract. On the website, the applica will be asked to describe his bus ness and how he could help th prime with a particular project. H must be prepared to provide eve detail of his past experience, ear ings, and financial standing an give a host of references. The appl cant could wait months and the one day receive a notice indicatin a particular job the prime nee filled—for instance, that three ho pitals need to be built in Tikrit. bidding process ensues.

Only the best of the best will su vive this process, which is wh America is all about after all. If t prime doesn't weed out the appl cant, chances are the governme will. Before a company gets a co tract, its employees must have D fense Base Act insurance. This mandatory for anyone doing busine overseas with Uncle Sam, and r quired before stepping foot into Ira

A insurance is your worker's
npensation; it deducts 20 percent
our contract salary.
We also learn that not every prime
l cover security costs, which can
luct another 20 percent of your
ıry. And since we're doing business
he Cradle of Civilization, any sub
o hits a bag of bones while digging
he desert must immediately cease all
k and organize a full-scale archae-
gical dig, complete with the hiring
cientists and round-the-clock se-
ity. This could last months. Con-
cts must be read very carefully.
ances are the sub will be stuck pay-
for this little addition to history.
ally, the government stresses that
licants be very familiar with the
leral Acquisition Regulation, which
out the rules governing the allo-
ion of government contract funds.
roughout the process, FAR snags
arise, and a sub must know its place
hin the laws. The FAR has fifty-three sections that total over 2,000 pages.

During lunch break I sit in the
ino food court with Ernie Robbins,
roject manager for Parsons Corpo-
on, based in Pasadena, California.
ant to know what it takes to land a
ıtract with a prime and, with all
hurdles and mounds of red tape, if
of these men and women even
ıd a chance.
Robbins is impeccably dressed in a
y suit and sparkling cuff links, and
smells like expensive aftershave.
's a retired major general and a
ef engineer in the Air Force, and
v manages seven projects in Iraq
aling $2 billion—everything from
airing water systems to helping
pose of captured explosives. For
jor construction projects, he says,
rime mainly looks for companies
t have worked with the govern-
nt, or with a prime on an earlier
ject, and have a sterling reputa-
ı. A sub must come to the table
h the full package. Primes do not
commodities, they buy finished
ducts. Companies that sell pipe
l not be chosen as subs on the big
jects, but those who sell pipelines
l. A sub must also be ready to
ıp at a moment's notice, which is
y it helps to have expendable cap-
ital, and lots of it, to mobilize a team and get materials in place. A sub must be ready to fork over serious cash and not expect to see black for many months.

Robbins explains how the government requires primes to spend 10 to 23 percent of their contract salary on subcontracting to small businesses. But he's not out to mislead anyone. Getting a contract is tough if you've never worked with the government or a prime, and many of these small-business owners may quickly find themselves out of the game. But the money is only beginning to flow, he says, and companies that partner with smaller firms—best of all, Iraqi firms—stand a chance of maybe a second-tier subcontract. Patience is everything, and those who have the perseverance will still be standing when the team finally goes in for the Big Win.

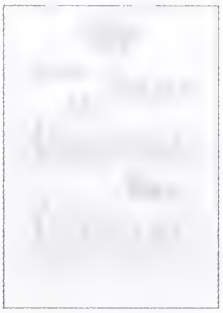
"There are a lot of good deeds to be done," Robbins says. "Bringing water and electricity to these people, why in the world would they not want this? We're not there to settle the country. When we finish, nobody's going to stake out their lower forty, build fences around it, and throw a cattle farm there. We don't want a homestead. We just wanna get the work done."

In the Emperors Foyer one of the Army girls explains to an old man how to find the Romans II–IV conference rooms, where a reception is planned for the afternoon. The Army girls had been giving directions all day to people who'd gotten lost in the casino's electric maze, where signs pointing to exits and conference rooms only seemed to lead to more slot machines. The Army issued maps of the casino at registration, but most people forgot them in their rooms. The old man is from Carlsbad, California, and speaks with a German accent. He tells the girls he hasn't been able to find his room since breakfast. He doubts he will ever find Romans II–IV.

"Well, here's how I remember," says the Army girl. "When you come to that eighteen-foot statue of Caesar, just turn left. Now how hard is that?"

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*Iraqis not only provides Americans with associates who possess market knowledge and generations of contacts; it also allows Iraqis to feel like they're taking part in their own reconstruction.*

The reception in Romans II–IV provides an exceptional partnering opportunity. The two dozen Iraqis attending the conference can finally meet their American counterparts and discuss teaming up in the desert. Since Americans aren't allowed to buy property in Iraq, only lease, Iraqis can scout out empty warehouses or abandoned factories, and help smooth the transaction. To the Iraqis, the Americans can provide commodities that Iraqis have been desperate for during their long period of sleep. Amid the low rumble of voices, you can hear Frank Besson, loaded with a stack of GreenMachine pamphlets, cornering an Iraqi man, telling him, "They're called TerraBricks, and these suckers will last 2,000 years . . ." Afterward, the Iraqis break off into their own groups, debating in Arabic and sending the waiters back to refill the vegetable tray.

Among the two dozen Iraqis in the room are Subhi and Mohammed Khudairi, who've come to Vegas with their father, Aziz. They're looking for potential investors to help salvage their family's paint and beverage factories in Baghdad, which crumbled during sanctions. Worse, the paint factory was recently shelled by American forces.

The Khudairis belong to one of the oldest merchant families in Iraq, a lineage that dates back hundreds of years. Twenty years ago, Aziz brought the family to Houston and has shuttled back and forth to Baghdad ever since. Mohammed and Subhi both graduated from the University of Texas at Austin, were esteemed members of the rowdy Kappa Alpha fraternity, and Mohammed ran in the same circles as Jenna Bush, the President's daughter.

In Romans II–IV, the Khudairi sons are dressed in sharp, designer suits and look like J. Crew models; both admit that their Arabic rings with a Texas twang. Whereas Mohammed's dark hair and complexion peg him as Arab, Subhi is fair-skinned, and his wavy hair is golden blond. Subhi recently quit his job as an equities trader at AIM Investments and now looks to "modernize" the family dynasty before it's rendered obsolete in the rush of American corporations. His girlfriend is blonde and pretty, the way a cheerleader is pretty, and has made it clear she doesn't want him going to Iraq. But after he took one of his buddies to Amman one summer, there's now a line of frat boys looking to hit the war zone with their own personal guide.

"My friends," he says, "used to call me the Wacky Iraqi."

The primes stand along the wall in front of foldaway display booths that are stacked with glossy literature and adorned with enlarged photos of men wearing hard hats in the desert. A line quickly forms at each booth. For the American small businessmen and -women, the reception is the conference's main event, possibly the only opportunity to have any face time with the big boys. Many take a moment to work up their nerve by hitting the cash bar or find comfort in the fried-burrito buffet. Clouds of cigarette smoke waft in from the hallway. Everyone knows that once he reaches the head of the line, there's only five minutes to make his pitch.

*Yes, be sure to study your FARs and know your DBAs, and take pride in knowing that you're the best damn plumbing-supply man in southern Illinois. But if you're given five minutes and you choke, if you enter the golden window and fall to pieces, chances are you will not be cast in this great ballet in the desert. Your business card will be lost and your phone will not ring. It's this dogfight spirit that makes America great, where only the strong and hungry of heart claw their way to the top, while the weak and ill-prepared are burned as fuel to keep the Vegas Strip blazing through the night.*

Dale and Jan Durham work the room like assassins, finishing with one prime, then jumping to the line of another. Under one arm, Dale holds a leather briefcase the size of a hatbox. His gray suit is outdated, but he wears it well. He has a thin face, a beard, and brown wispy hair. When he speaks to a prime, his body language is relaxed and puts the men at ease. But Dale is not at ease. D and Jan have come all the way fr Shreveport, Louisiana, holding th guts in their hands.

Dale and Jan own an engine support business, designing and dra ing blueprints of finished buildin This is all done by computer, a since everything in Iraq has be done by hand, Dale is confident t primes could use his service.

Five years ago, Dale had fifte employees and was pulling do nearly half a million a year in bu ness. He bought some land and bu a house and took out a loan from t bank. Just about then the econo crumbled. Companies stopped buil ing in Shreveport. Now Dale h only two employees and goes month or two without a job. T mortgage on the house is eating h alive. Somehow the house becar collateral on the business and t business became collateral on t house. And to top it off, he's got t kids waiting to go to college.

So when Dale saw on CNN th Congress had approved that $18 billion, he told Jan he wanted to to Iraq.

Dale is a former soldier, a First A mored Division tank command and certified "top gun." He serv most of his time in Germany duri the 1970s, where he learned to hit coffee can with a 105mm tank sh at 2,000 meters.

Dale says he is not afraid of Ira but it wasn't the Army that ma him hard. Dale grew up in a ti sawmill town in East Texas, poor a fatherless. His mother raised him her paltry wages from a furniture fa tory, and her brothers and nephe made sure he learned to fight, usual by just beating his ass. He prowl the honky-tonks and became damn good instigator" and all arou hell-raiser. The military taught hi discipline, but it was Jan who can along and straightened him ou made him want to be a better ma "She made me finally feel safe in r life," says Dale.

Dale says he was aware of the da gers, about Nick Berg and Thom Hamill and snipers perched in t underpasses. He knows that a de

ısband provides nothing but grief. ıt in his core, Iraq is calling him.

"He's like a little boy sometimes," ys Jan. "He actually wants to be ere."

Dale says, "I grew up in an atmohere where I'm most comfortable conflict." Jan just shakes her head. True to his profession, Dale has degned mental storyboards and blueints for every possible scenario he ight face if given a contract. And ere are requirements that must be et—certain things to justify the dan- r and loneliness in the desert. Of urse, the job has to make money for th himself and the prime; that way th teams are happy. But most of all, says, it has to be something positive r the Iraqi people, "something a oud man can be proud of."

"People are going back to school d work for the first time in years," ys Jan. "For the first time, they're tting a good life, and he can be rt of that."

"It's a win-win situation," says ıle.

"And look at all the debt we can y off," says Jan. "This is a good ing for us."

Dale nods his head. "It's the only ing."

By the time the reception is over, ıle and Jan manage to pitch every ime in the room. The only solid ıd comes from a man from Conıck International, who asks if Dale ould be interested in training Iraqis use the drafting software. In the iddle of the conversation, the man ops and looks Dale in the eyes. `ell me straight," the man says. ıre you *really* willing to go to Iraq?" ıle never hesitates.

Afterward we go for a drink at the alleria Bar, where a lounge act ays quietly in the corner. The bar open to the casino floor, where old omen in tank tops sit catatonic in ont of the flashing wheels. Dale orrs a coffee and says he wants to ow me something. He unzips his ather briefcase and holds it open. side are files three inches thick on ery prime that had stood in Roans II–IV, complete with company stories, earning reports, and conıcting preferences.

"I could tell you what those guys eat for breakfast," says Dale. "And you talk about the FAR. I've read every damn page."

"As you can tell," says Jan, "we've been waiting for this conference for months."

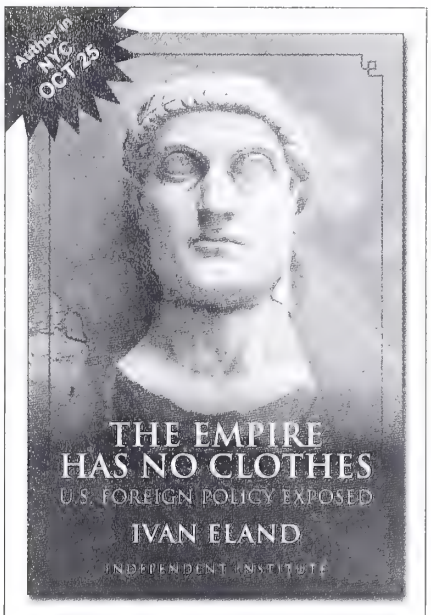
Dale teases Jan about being a "city girl" who's hardly ever left Shreveport, and tells a funny story about the time she tried cleaning catfish. Jan teases Dale about wearing his "city shoes" for the first time in years—a pair of black tasseled loafers—instead of his everyday cowboy boots. It's Dale's first time in Vegas, but there will be no gambling. Most of their savings went toward plane tickets and three nights at Caesars Palace.

"It's appropriate they had this conference in a casino," says Dale, staring into the sea of lights and machines. He shakes a pair of imaginary dice in his fist, blows on them for luck, and sends them tumbling across the table. "Here's to everything," he says.

That night I leave my room and wander through the casino. It's late, and Caesars Palace buzzes with those still chasing the edge of a dream, diehards who take their nourishment from cocktails of bottled oxygen and watered-down gin, and who never question time.

A shirtless man dressed as Caesar and carrying a sword passes me near the registration desk. His muscles glisten under the lights, and gold leaves shimmer in his hair. Two buxom women in bikini tops hug each arm while the three of them pose for photos with a group of plump schoolteachers. There's the fraternity man with a bull neck and apple cheeks, who lips a cigar as he drags his drunk sobbing girlfriend behind him; the lone Chinese man who stands at the baccarat table, staring down the dealer with a look that could cut a diamond; teenage girls in see-through skirts smoking cigarettes and gazing through expensive shop windows. Everywhere I turn there are honeymooners.

I find a seat at the Shadow Bar and order a beer. Two girls dance topless behind a silk screen, their lithe arms and fingers snaking above


Most Americans don't think of their government as an empire, but in fact the United States has been steadily expanding its control of overseas territories since the turn of the twentieth century. Now, with more than 700 military bases worldwide, the U.S. holds sway over an area that dwarfs the great empires of world history.

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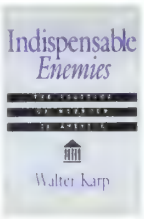
—Alan Wolfe, *The Progressive*



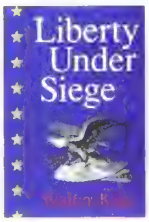

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their faceless heads like black smok
Like Vegas, Iraq can be anything t
everyone: a magic portal out of har
times, or a sparkling mirage tha
evaporates with you inside. It has be
come Dale's golden key, and wit
him still fresh in my mind, I'm re
minded of another man I met a fe
weeks before.

I ran into Gerald Flannery i
Lansing, Michigan, at a similar co
ference on doing business in Ira
He'd hobbled into the conferen
room using a walking stick decorate
with Indian beads and crystals. H
silver hair was long in back, but h
beard was neatly trimmed. He
struck up a conversation with one
the government officials, somethin
about the war and all the negativ
news and how Michigan could u
some contracts in Iraq. "Yep," sa
Gerald, heading toward his chai
"As soon as I get my back fixed, I'
gonna strap on an AK-47 and s
what I can do over there."

I immediately introduced myse
and made arrangements to meet la
er that afternoon. When he handd
me his business card, I noticed a t
too of a pentagram on the back
his hand.

Gerald's house was south of Flin
a hulking tri-level home on fiv
acres surrounded by thick fores
When I pulled into the drive, he w
out in the yard.

"Saw a wounded hawk when
pulled up a while ago," said Geral
pointing into the trees. "Damn do
must've scared him off."

We stood there a couple of mi
utes looking for the wounded haw
but finally gave up and went inside.

Gerald's wife was out for the afte
noon, so the two of us sat around th
bar in the kitchen. Gerald pour
himself a glass of red wine, and f
the next two hours he explain
how an opportunity like Iraq cou
be an answer for almost everythi
wrong in his world—from the c
croachment of "Red China" o
Michigan's working people to l
own engulfing darkness.

The way Gerald saw it, outsourci
to China was gutting Michigan's onc
booming industry of auto-parts man
facturers. Men who once pulled dou
six-figure salaries were now filling

plications at Wal-Mart. Eight mil-
n of the nation's manufacturing
s have vanished since 1990. Gerald
dn't escaped the damage: after twen-
years in business, he was forced to
rge his gauge-manufacturing com-
ny with a big firm, which eventual-
squeezed him out.
As president of the Michigan Tool-
Association, which represents 750
tewide tool-and-die companies,
rald sees Iraq as a way for his guys
get back on their feet and save their
mpanies from the auction block. Of
urse, they face the same hurdles and
l tape as everyone else: the chal-
ge of finding Iraqi business part-
rs, guys you could trust to arrange
ngs on that end. And no one real-
knows how damaged the manufac-
ring infrastructure is, especially after
the bombing. What small busi-
ssman can afford to build a factory
a war zone?
Gerald said he couldn't personally
at least until his back was better.
ars of martial arts eventually wore
ay two lower vertebrae, which will
quire major surgery. His health in
neral, he said, was not very good.
"There's also my wife," Gerald
d. His mood darkened consider-
ly. "She promised an instant di-
rce if I went to Iraq."
Three years ago, Gerald's son was
led when the four-wheeler he'd
en driving slammed into a tree.
was twenty years old. Gone, just
e that. The boy riding with him
lked away with barely a scratch.
rald's son was his best friend; he'd
ght the kid everything, and they
re hardly ever apart. And when
died, so did Gerald's will to live.
ter the funeral, he told his wife he
s only sticking around for their
enty-seven-year-old daughter.
"What do I have to lose?" he said.
lot a lot. Every day of my life is
ll. It's like a goddamn movie that
ver stops."
Gerald explained how Iraq was his
g Out. It had nothing to do with
king money or paying bills. It was
t a way to end a sick, tormented life
thout having to do the messy work
nself. Gerald wanted to die like a
n, and with a bang if he could.
"I'd just as soon jump in a cargo
ne full of Rangers and shoot till
I'm dead," he said. He rubbed his beard and smiled. The words coming out of his mouth seemed to surprise him. "I'd much rather die by the sword than sitting in a chair."

Talking about his son seemed to open a dark spillway in Gerald's soul, or maybe it was just the wine. He then told me he kept closets full of guns and assault rifles. He had studied various religions and the occult as a young man, which explained the pentagram tattoo. He was part Crow, part Blackfoot, and had two large tribal tattoos on both of his meaty shoulders. The concept of tribalism had fascinated him throughout his life, and this knowledge helped him understand the Middle East. Terrorism in Iraq and Israel can be defeated by thinking in tribalistic terms, he said. For instance, send an army into Fallujah and Gaza and start systematically killing people, even women and kids, until the mullahs realize you mean business.

"Once their seed is threatened," he said, "they'll rethink their terror tactics."

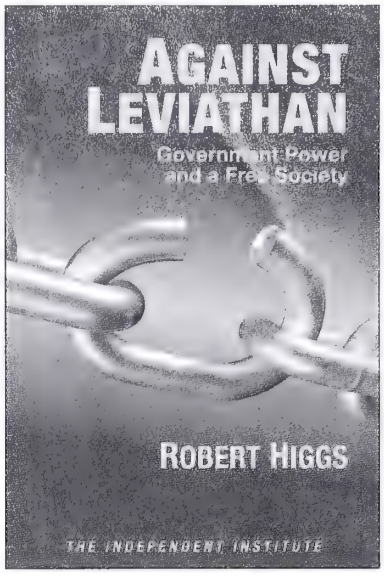
Gerald opened the door and let in his dogs, two hulking gray Bouviers that jumped into my lap, all round happy eyes and wet tongues. Their attention quickly turned to a muted television in the corner of the room. Two men on-screen were having a fist fight, and both dogs started flipping out, barking and jumping around the room.

"They don't like violence," said Gerald. "Weirdest thing."

I had a long drive ahead of me, so I thanked Gerald for his hospitality and got up to leave. Be careful out there, he said, and I told him to let me know when he finally made the big plunge. His handshake was tight, and I couldn't help but wonder if he was looking for his son as he held on. We made plans to talk again, traded email addresses, and said goodbye. When I pulled out of the drive, I saw him gaze out across the yard, looking for that wounded hawk.

On the last day in Vegas, there's a continental breakfast in the Emperors Foyer, followed by a lecture on true grit. Major James Blanco, from the Army's Small Business






What is fundamentally wrong with government today? In ***Against Leviathan***, economist and historian Robert Higgs offers an unflinching critical analysis of government power.

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Office, reminds everyone that Iraq isn't the junior varsity. Iraq is a high-stakes blood sport played by men with balls the size of Big Wheels. Men who could morph their bodies into polished steel from pure will alone and fly there themselves. This is nothing like doing business in Canada. "Iraq is the game we're playing here, folks," he reminds us. "And if you're not willing to spend $79 a night at Caesars Palace to find out about multibillion-dollar opportunities, then you better think again about what you're doing."

Major Blanco then teaches us how to navigate the Small Business Office's website, which he designed himself. The website appears on a giant screen, and Major Blanco tells us to pay close attention. We start with a virtual tour of the office, which begins with a helicopter landing on an airstrip outside the Pentagon and a super soldier named Sergeant Hoo-ah leading the group through the warrens of the building. At one point, Sergeant Hoo-ah takes us through a door where images of combat soldiers splash across the screen, from grunts in wigs fighting the Revolutionary War to the hard-bitten Rangers storming the desert in Iraq.

"This is my own personal tribute," says Major Blanco, gazing up at the screen. "I'm still moved every time I see it."

Major Blanco tells us he'd been depressed about missing the war and not getting any trigger time, knowing his buddies would return as Minotaurs while he pushed paper for the Man. But after attending these conferences, and later hearing the stories of success and fortune, he soon realized the battlefield wasn't where victory would be won. Iraq will be won by the men and women in this room, the rank and file of Main Street, because commerce is our greatest weapon against terror and evil. Major Blanco stands tall, a born-again hacker, and tells us, "I realized then I had the greatest job of my life."

Afterward, Mark Lumer returns to the stage to tell us another story about how the American way is conquering darkness: An Iraqi contractor walks into the Coalition headquarters one day to get paid for a project he'd just completed. The American at the payroll desk says, "Absolutely, sir. Come this way." There are no banks in Iraq, so the American takes the Iraqi down into the vault, where there's millions of dollars in cash. He counts out $25,000 and places the stack in front of the Iraqi contractor. "Thank you for your hard work, sir," says the American payroll man. "Now just sign here." The Iraqi signs his name to the ledger, but then he just stands there. The American tells him, "There's your money, you're free to go." The Iraqi replies, "I understand," but still he stands there. The American says, "Really, sir, you can take your money." "I understand," says the Iraqi, but he doesn't move. Finally, the American says, "Well, what in hell are you waiting for?" The Iraqi says, "For you to take your cut." The American payroll man looks the Iraqi dead in the eyes and tells him, "Sir, that is not the way we do business in America." Streams of tears begin to roll down the Iraqi contractor's face. Overcome with emotion, he grabs the American payroll man and kisses him on both cheeks.

The Emperors Ballroom explodes with whooping and applause, a swell of patriotism and pride so fierce it nearly lifts the Palace Tower off its foundation. The pent-up emotion is overwhelming, and I myself am overwhelmed with an ecstatic vision of the tower rising up from the Vegas Strip and into the clear blue afternoon sky. With Lumer steering our course from the podium, we kiss the stratosphere and rocket through at the awesome speed of light. Within minutes, Earth appears on the giant screen. Then, as we get closer, we see a brilliant glow, so bright it hurts to look.

"The future!" shouts Lumer.

It's a golden city, sparkling in the desert sun. The Tigris and Euphrates glisten like a string of jewels. There are no sounds of gunfire, only the evanescence of children singing. As we hover closer, we can see the great fruits of our victory: every street is gloriously choked with traffic, and there's a satellite dish perched atop every roof. We hold one another and cry tears of joy.

By the end of the afternoon, I manage to escape the Emperors Ballroom and head toward the casi floor. As I cruise down the escalat I realize I haven't been outside three days. I dash through the ca comb of lights, past cigarette gi and crowds of the walking dead, u til I'm outside under an open sk breathing the fresh sultry Vegas a It's near twilight, and a three-quar moon hangs above the Strip just li another tourist attraction.

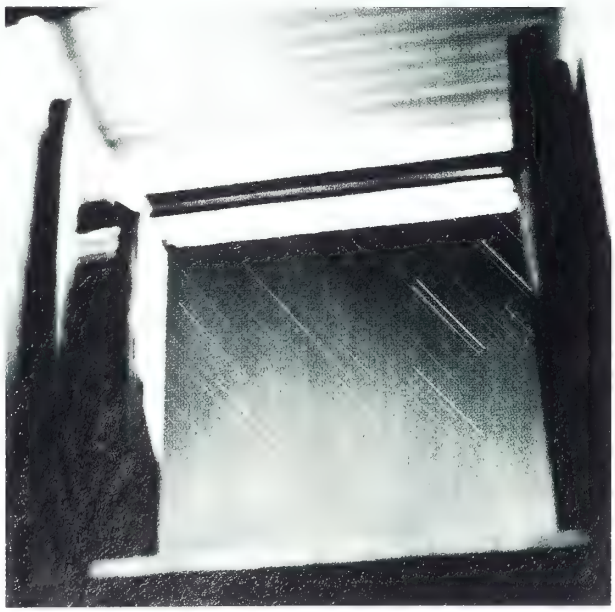
Dale was right: it was fitting th they'd held this conference at casino. He'd implied the gamble, course, but the real message go well beyond that. *Here was democr cy on the head of a pin, everythi worth defending and carrying on o backs to those less fortunate. It gl tered and beeped and danced naked b hind the bar. It instantly made y rich, or slowly bled you clean. But least it allowed you to try. It was fre dom, as pure as the oxygen pump through the vents. And it is why th hate us, those rejectionists with th primitive ways and the goddamn ch on their shoulders. They hate us b cause we're happy.*

I reach the Bellagio Hotel just time for the famous light sho Every twenty minutes 1,000 fou tains in front of the palatial hot do their own water dance wit beams of light and music. I join th crowd of people along the founta rail, many of them tourists fro other countries dressed in shor and sun visors. We check o watches and jostle for space, n wanting to miss a second. The sho begins with spectacular pomp: all once the music trumpets from perimeter of speakers as the fou tain comes alive in shoots of wat and colored light. The music none other than Lee Greenwoo singing "God Bless the USA," and search the fountain rail for Ma Lumer or Major Blanco, winking they harness the daydream. Inste I see several men removing the hats, staring wide-eyed into th pulsing light. I want to climb th rail and shout, "This is not our a them!" But the song reaches i crashing finale, and we all crane o heads toward the sky. The wat bursting into the air sounds exact like cannons.

# THE ACCELERATING EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE

*By John Updike*

Why should it bother Martin Fair-
eather? In his long, literate lifetime
had read of many revisions
cosmic theory. Edwin Hub-
e's discovery of universal
pansion had occurred a few
ars before he was born; by
e time of his young man-
od, the theory of the Big
ng, with its overtones of
ristian Creation by fiat—
et there be light"—had pre-
iled over the rather more
ddhist steady-state theory
aiming that space itself pro-
ced, out of nothingness,
e hydrogen atom at a time.
recent decades, in astron-
ny as in finance, billions
d replaced millions as the
eful unit: a billion galaxies,
billion stars in each. Ever
onger telescopes, including
e suspended in space and
med after Hubble, revealed
swarm of fuzzy ovals, each a
ilky Way. Such revelations, stupe-
ing for those who tried truly to con-
ive of the distances and time spans,
e amounts of brute matter and of



vacancy seething with virtual parti-
cles, had held for Fairweather the far-fetched hope of a last turn: a culminating piece in the great skyey puzzle would vindicate Mankind's sensation of central importance and disclose a titanic mercy lurking behind the cosmic arrangements.

But the fact, discovered by two independent teams of researchers, seemed to be that not only did deep space show no relenting in the speed of the farthest galaxies but instead a detectable acceleration, so that an eventual dispersion of everything into absolute cold and darkness could be confidently predicted. We are riding a pointless explosion to nowhere. Only an invisible, malevolent anti-gravity, a so-called Dark Force, explained it. Why should Fairweather take it personally? The universe would by a generous margin outlive him—that had always been true. But he had somehow relied on eternity, on there being an eternity even if he wasn't invited to participate in it. The accelerating expansion of the universe imposed an ignominious, cruelly diluted finitude on the enclosing vastness. The eternal hypothetical structures—God, Paradise, the moral law within—now had utterly no base to stand on. All would melt away. He, no mystic, had always taken a sneaky comfort in the idea of a universal pulse, an alternating Big Bang and Big Crunch, each time recasting matter into an unimaginably small furnace, a subatomic point of fresh beginning. Now this comfort was taken from him, and

*hn Updike's short-story collection* The
rly Stories, 1953–1975 *recently won the*
*EN/Faulkner Fiction Award. A new nov-*
Villages, *will be published in October.*

edtime View, Castellina in Chianti, Italy," by Robert Vizzini. Courtesy ClampArt, New York City

he drifted into a steady state—an estranging fever, scarcely detectable by those around him—of depression.

Fairweather had not hitherto really believed in his own aging. He could see in the mirror his multiplying gray hairs, his deepening wrinkles, and feel his shortness of breath after exertion, his stiffness after sitting too long in a chair or a car; but these phenomena took place a safe distance from the center of his being. He felt essentially exempt from ruin. He had had a fortunate life.

He went to Spain with his wife as part of his good fortune. Their annual or semiannual trips to Europe had gradually exhausted the more obvious tourist destinations—England, France, Italy, Greece, Scandinavia. She had never been to Spain, and he only once before, on a hurried student trip that had left little trace in his memory. After Madrid and the obligatory day flight to Bilbao to see Frank Gehry's titanium whale, they came south into the land where the Moors for centuries raised lemons, erected filigreed mosques, and sang love songs around the murmurous fountains in the courtyards.

Seville seemed a little short of charm, or perhaps the Fairweathers were tired of being charmed. They were fresh from Granada and Córdoba. In every cathedral and palace there lurked a gloomy Christian boast that the Moors, with their superior refinement and religious tolerance, had been expelled. The Alcázar Palace and the Cathedral of Santa María de la Sede were both, it seemed to Fairweather, bigger than they needed to be, and the streets of the old ghetto, which held their hotel, were narrow and heavily trafficked by buzzing mopeds and rickety delivery trucks that ignored the pedestrians-only signs.

Late one afternoon the aging couple, having done its duty by the Casa de Pilatos, emerged with some relief from the ghetto's quaint alleys onto a slightly broader thoroughfare. They had coffee at an outdoor table, and then headed back to their hotel. His sense of direction told him that the most direct route lay along a busy one-way street with a narrow sidewalk on one side. "You think?" his cautious wife asked. "Suppose I fall off into traffic?"

"Why would you fall off?" Fairweather scoffed. "I'll be right behind you."

It was true, the noisy stream of traffic did feel very close as they made their way single file, Fairweather in the rear. Fiats and Vespas sped by, stirring the ubiquitous dust. He was watching her feet, or looking at his own, when a sudden sensation of pressure pushed him off balance, and down; there was no resisting this inexplicable force. He fell sideways, twisting. In the midst of his plunge he saw, inches from his eyes, the face, the porous new-shaven cheek, of a dark-haired young man; the man was grimacing with some terrible effort, with some ordeal that he, too, was undergoing.

Then Fairweather hit the asphalt, facedown. His arms were pinioned by the relentless force at his back, and he foresaw that his forehead would strike the street's hard surface. No sooner had this thought been entertained by his brain than the sensation of a momentarily blinding blow on his brow told him that the worst was over, that he would survive.

Automobiles were braking behind him. He raised his head in time to see two men on a moped turn down a side street and, smartly leaning in unison, vanish. One of them had been his dark-haired companion in gravity's terrible grip. The weight on his back was still there, but it lifted, cautiously, and Fairweather realized that the weight had been his wife's body. He lay some seconds longer on the street's abrasive, dirty surface, in a position that felt obscurely privileged, while he relished the apparent fact that his skull had taken the blow without surrendering consciousness: he was one tough old *americano*.

Bit by bit, his swirl of sensations was retrospectively clarified. By the time he got to his feet, with the help of several hands, he understood that his wife's shoulder bag had been snatched and she had been pulled into him. The two of them had been welded together by the pressur[e] the dark-haired thief struggle[d] hold onto his prize without losing [it] seat on the speeding moped. F[air]weather's thumped brain, he n[ot]ed with satisfaction, was in excell[ent] order, working very fast. But it [had] not been fast enough for him [to] reach up and pull his assailant d[own] with him. He would have liked, v[ery] much, to have done that.

His wife, Carol, had once bee[n a] nurse. She still quickened to em[er]gencies. She was staring intently at [his] face. So, with less disguised alarm, w[as] the several Spaniards who had g[at]ered behind her. "I'm fine," he sai[d] his wife. He addressed the Spania[rds] "*Bueno. No problema.*"

His wife said softly, in her sooth[ing] emergency voice, "Darling, don't [try] to talk. Let's take off your jacket."

"My jacket?" A light tan wi[nd]breaker, with a lining for warmth in [the] Spanish spring, it had been bou[ght] new for the trip. "Why?"

He wondered if he was supposed [to] be translating their exchanges to [the] gathered crowd. "*¿Por qué?*" he tra[n]lated aloud.

"Keep calm," she told him lev[el]ly, as if he were crazed. "I'll h[old] you, darling."

Fairweather was beginning to f[eel] her officious; but in moving his lip[s] protest he tasted something warm a[nd] salty. Then, as a walker in the wo[rld] realizes that a tickly swarm of mid[ges] have enveloped his head, he reali[zed] that he was bleeding down his fa[ce]. His face had met the asphalt on [the] right eyebrow, the crest of bo[ne] there—a blood-packed site, he kn[ew] from old sports injuries. He saw t[he] light: his wife, the eminently practi[cal] nurse, was worried that he would bl[eed] on the new windbreaker. It had [not] been expensive, but it evidently o[ut]weighed his wound, his drama. As [she] gently peeled the coat from his sho[ul]ders, the crowd behind her, and t[he] cabdriver who had braked in time [to] avoid running over him, started to [of]fer advice, of which the most pro[mi]nent word was *policía*. "*Policía, polici[a]*" they seemed to be chanting.

After removing his coat, Carol h[ad] picked his hip pocket, and now s[he] handed him his own folded handk[er]chief and indicated that he sho[uld]

p it pressed against his right or-
l arch. Thus dramatized, on center
e amid the halted traffic, Fair-
ther stood tall; he gestured rather
dly with his free hand, like a mata-
disavowing a spectacular kill.
licía," he pronounced scornfully,
, unable to come up with the Span-
for "What can they do?" expressed
opinion "*¡Polizía—nada!*" From
r alarmed faces, it could have been
e happily put. Not long ago, this
been a police state.

raffic was beginning to honk; the
driver needed to get on his way.
s driver, wearing a wool jacket and
n the formal, self-important Euro-
n manner, was small and round-
d and visibly shaken by nearly run-
g over an elderly American. His
d still held aloft, Fairweather told
, "*Muchas gracias, señor—vaya con*
s." The phrase had floated into his
d from a Patti Page song popular
en he was an adolescent. To the
wd he proclaimed, "*¡Adiós, amigos!*"
s, too, was no doubt inadequate,
what he wanted to say in final bene-
tion materialized in his head only
in French: "*Tous vous êtes*
*très gentiles*."

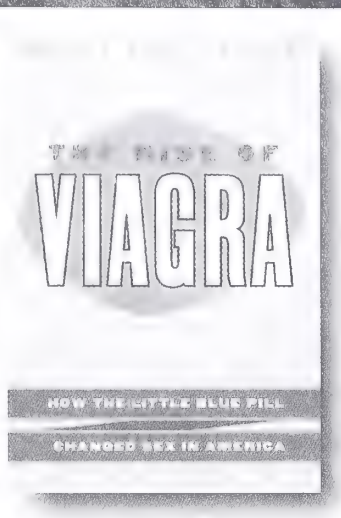
airweather felt exhilarated, striding
ough the antique streets holding a
ody handkerchief to his orbital arch
ile his wife—younger than he, with
t blue eyes—trotted beside him
ding his jacket, which, for all her
ncern, bore only a single drop of
od, now dried. "That son of a bitch,"
said, meaning the thief. "What all
you have in it?" he asked, meaning
shoulder bag.

'My wallet, without much money.
e credit cards are the big nuisance.
ey can help me cancel them back
the hotel. If they can give me
ions and salt, I can get the blood
of the jacket."

'Will you stop focusing on my *blood*?
u knew when you married me I had
od inside me." Why be angry at
? *¿Por qué?* As if in apology, he said,
u always hear of things like this, but
ever thought it would happen to
." He corrected himself. "To us."
e was teaching him, this late in his
, feminism.

Carol in turn explained, "I was so
ncerned with staying on the side-


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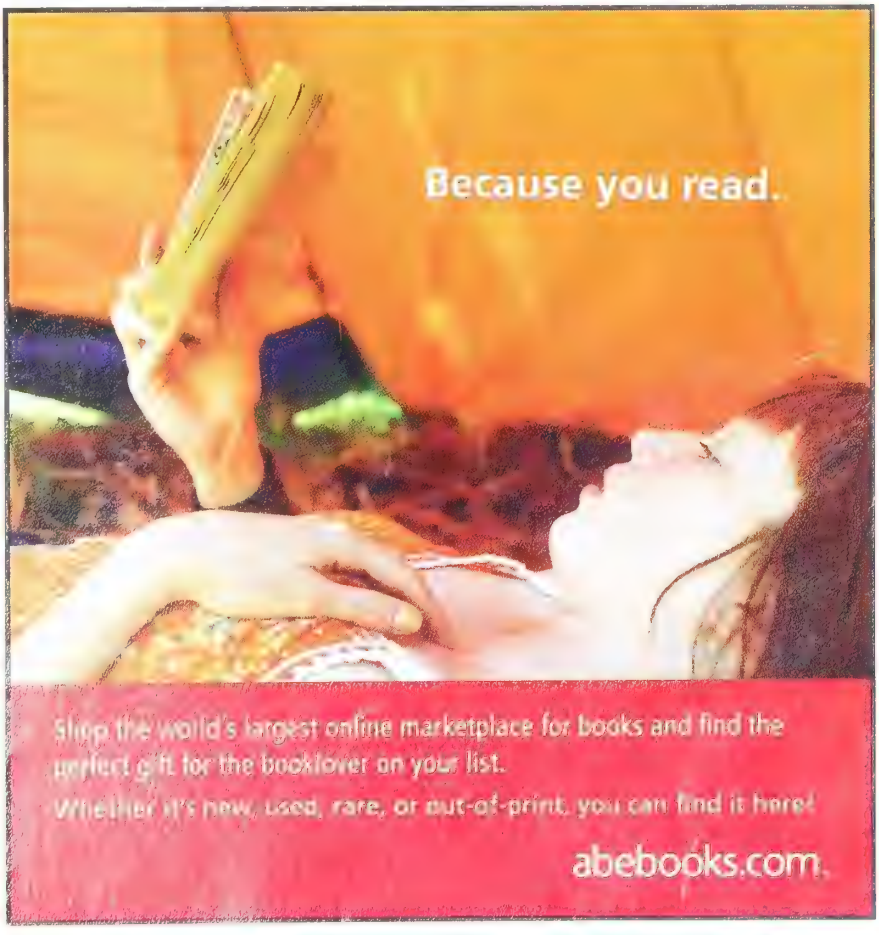
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walk I guess I forgot to switch the bag to my inside shoulder. Now I keep thinking of everything that was in it. The Instamatic full of shots of the Alhambra and the cathedral with all those pillars, whatever it was called, that used to be a mosque. My favorite scarf—you can't get wool that light weight anymore. Marty, I feel sick. This is all just hitting me. The guidebook kept warning us about Gypsies. Did he look like a Gypsy to you? I never saw him."

"Boy, I did. His face was right next to mine for a second. He didn't wear an earring, just a very determined expression. I guess he thought you'd let go before you did."

"I couldn't believe somebody else wanted it," she said. "It was so sudden, you don't think. Thank you, by the way, for cushioning my fall. I didn't even skin my knees."

"Anytime, my dear. That's rotten about your perfect scarf."

"He won't know what it was worth to me. He'll throw it away."

*La policía* were already at the hotel. How had they known? "The cabdriver reported," said the smiling young clerk behind the desk. "Then they called hotels." How much of a police state was this, still? The policeman himself, a phlegmatic, bland man in his forties—colorless, as if a policeman's experience had washed all the color and capacity for surprise out of him—spoke no English; at least he didn't risk his dignity by venturing even a phrase. He glanced at Fairweather's clotted eyebrow and gave him a long form to fill out. Through the desk clerk, the policeman communicated an intention to take him away, though the victim protested, "*Es nada. Nada.*" Mrs. Fairweather, the desk clerk translated with a smile that promised a rare treat, was invited to come along.

In the back of the police car she confided, "The clerk was telling me while you were being looked at about a woman who got thrown down and broke her hip, and in another incident a husband who tried to intervene and got stabbed and killed. So we were lucky."

"Good for us," Fairweather said, beginning to feel weary. His eyebrow stung. Shock was wearing off. They were being taken, he realized, out of the tourist region, into the real Seville, its ordinary neighborhoods and everyday institutions. [illegible] and sleepy, driving and arriving. They passed down streets of restaurants, past banks and a department store, all still bustling in the growing dark, when an American city would be shutting down. The silent policeman stopped his car. This must be the hospital. The building had a six-story Beaux-Arts core with a post-Franco modern wing. Within, all was brightly lit but with a milkier, subtler light than an American hospital would have employed. The dramas that flood hospitals on American television were not occurring here. Instead, there was a thinly populated languor; most of the desks were empty. No one seemed to speak English. Nor did the policeman offer anyone in his own language a long explanation of Fairweather's case—his crisis, his survival.

Two uniformed women, possibly nuns, one in green and one in white, interviewed the victim. Fairweather pointed at his wound and explained, "*Dos hombres jotenes. Vespa. Vroom, vrrrooom! Mi esposa*"—at a loss for words to describe how Carol had been tugged down, he made a grab at his own shoulder, then did a toppling motion with his forearm—"*boom!*" The women nodded sympathetically, and went away, and eventually brought a man down the echoing hall. Feminist though he was becoming, Fairweather was relieved to see a man taking charge. The word *hidalgo* came to his mind; the man was a somebody, a son of somebody. He was short and fair and squarish—a blond descendant of the Visigoths, with a toothbrush mustache and an air of courteous amusement. He was a doctor. He examined Fairweather's eyebrow and gestured for him to sit on a high, sheeted bed. Fairweather liked his gestures, firm but unhurried, with a touch of ceremony.

Fairweather's comprehension of Spanish was improving; he understood that the doctor was asking the nurse for Novocaine, and that the nurse came back, rather breathlessly reporting that no Novocaine could be found. The doctor urbanely shrugged, but his eyes declined to join his patient's in a wink at such female incompetence. When at last, after much distant chatter and [illegible] ter the anesthetic was found, [illegible] weather lay back and shut his e[illegible] He felt a paper mask being lowe[illegible] onto his face. In her soothing nu[illegible] voice Carol described in his ear w[illegible] was happening to him: "Now, M[illegible] he has the needle, you're goin[illegible] feel a pinch, he's injecting all aro[illegible] the gash, don't move your head [illegible] denly. Now he has some gauze, [illegible] going to wipe out your eyebr[illegible] don't make that funny face, k[illegible] your face still . . ."

Through his numbness Fairwe[illegible] er felt the tug of the stitches and [illegible] latex-gloved fingertips lightly pr[illegible] ing on his brow. How kind this c[illegible] tor, and the policeman, and this [illegible] tire post-Fascist nation were! W[illegible] the operation was over, he produ[illegible] his wallet, holding credit cards a[illegible] pastel salad of Euro bills, but his [illegible] tempt at payment was waved av[illegible] Instead, a flamboyantly signed d[illegible] ment, giving his wound an offi[illegible] status, was handed to him. A sli[illegible] ceremonious smile tweaked [illegible] toothbrush mustache. "One wee[illegible] the doctor said, in his lone effor[illegible] English, "stitches out."

In a week, Fairweather, his bl[illegible] eye faded, was back in the Uni[illegible] States, where his own doctor[illegible] youth no older than the Gypsy r[illegible] ber, marveled that the stitches w[illegible] silk. "In this country," he explain[illegible]

"you never see real [illegible] used anymore."

Why was this unlucky even[illegible] being mugged and injured in a f[illegible] eign land—so pleasing to Fairwea[illegible] er? It was, he supposed, the elem[illegible] of contact. In his universe of acce[illegible] ating expansion, he enjoyed less a[illegible] less contact. Retired, he had l[illegible] contact with his old associates, ful[illegible] sociable promises though their p[illegible] ings had been. His children w[illegible] adult and far-flung, and the gra[illegible] children within his reach had o[illegible] polite interest in the stale treats—[illegible] moronic kiddie movies, the expe[illegible] tions to cacophonous bowling ali[illegible] indelibly smelling of cigarettes—th[illegible] he could offer. His old poker gro[illegible] which used to crowd eight aroun[illegible] dining-room table, had increasi[illegible] difficulty mustering the minimu[illegible]

players, and his old golf foursome been dispersed to infirmity and ida if not to the grave. One part- remained who shared Fairweath- old-fashioned aversion to riding a cart and was willing to walk with ; on a winter morning his hand- e photograph, twenty years out of , popped up in the obituary sec- n of the *Boston Globe*.

Other than the obituaries, newspa- s had less and less in them that tained to Fairweather—crucial ts contests, burning social issues, rnational crises, all took place r a certain horizon. A curvature of cern left him out of it. He was is- lded. Even his doctors and finan- advisers, the caretakers of his old , were increasingly difficult to ch, hiding behind a screen of orded messages and secretaries se hurried, immigrant accents e difficult for Fairweather to deci- r. If a heart attack or a catastroph- lownturn in the market were to rtake him, he would be left ching the telephone while shim- ring streams of Vivaldi or soupy trumental arrangements of old tles standards filled the inter- able wait for the next available ice representative.

As opposed to this, there had n the Spanish doctor, his firm vet touch on Fairweather's brow, l the member of the *policía* pro- ing in stoical silence a tour of the l Seville, and the swarthy young gger, not necessarily a Gypsy but inctly dark, with shiny black hair *brosse*, his face inches away and chingly contorted in the work of aining his loot. In Spain, every- ng had felt closer.

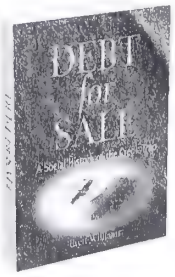
Mrs. Fairweather, meanwhile, led ever busier American life, with committees and bridge groups l book clubs and manicure ap- ntments. She had joined the uni- sal dispersion of which Fairweath- felt himself at the center. As she nt off one day, she assigned him a all task that, she patiently ex- ined, "even he" could do. Last mmer she had decided, against his vice, to have the two heavy tall ors opening into the living room noved. "I *hate* stuffy rooms," she d him, unstoppably. "Air! Light!" It made the house airier but (he pointed out in vain) harder to heat.

Too heavy for him to lift, the doors had been carried down to the barn by two young men and wrapped in a tarpaulin and leaned in a corner, against the remote possibility of their re-installation someday, if not by the Fairweathers then by the next owners—even the house, as his time in it dwindled, was flying from him. One of the doors had a blue doorknob, rare old cobalt glass, which Carol wanted to see installed where they could enjoy the sight of it. Could he possibly go down and take the knob off? "Really, a child could do it," she said.

The day was a clear one in February, with a cold breeze. The barn was a relic of the horse-and-buggy era, with several stalls and mangers and a large central space the Fairweathers had slowly filled with things they didn't have the heart or the imagination to throw away. Their children had left bulky deposits of school books, flat-tired bicycles, defunct toys, unplayable 33⅓ r.p.m. records. Dead ancestors persisted in the form of framed diplomas, garden tools, and musty trunks stuffed with clothes and letters more ancient than the barn itself.

After a frightening moment of senile blankness, Fairweather recalled the padlock combination. The creosoted barn doors creaked open. The interior held the dim, expectant hush of an abandoned church. The two living-room doors leaned in their beige tarpaulin against a wall six feet behind an old cherrywood corner cupboard that Fairweather had inherited when his mother died. The imposing three-sided cupboard had been a presence in his childhood, a choice piece of Pennsylvania cabinetmaking and a looming proof of his family's pretensions to respectability. In a child's view it emanated the grave mystery of ownership—to buy things, and then to have them all yours, and to have the state with its laws and enforcers keep others from taking them, had struck him as a solemn and central privilege. He could hardly bear to part with anything that was his. Even the

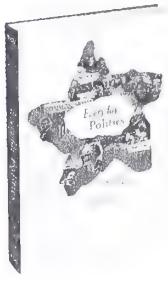
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oldest clothes might be used as cleaning rags, or an outfit for a very dirty job, dirtier than this one.

A section of the corner cupboard with paneled doors formed the lower portion; upon it rested, with no attachment but gravity, a similar-size unit whose single large door held nine panes of wavery old glass. The shelves behind the glass used to be loaded with rarely used family china, its gleaming ranks changelessly presiding in the dining room while the child Fairweather played on the carpet and executed crayon drawings, much admired by his elders, at the dining table. When, after a long widowhood, his mother had died, the cupboard had seemed the most precious part of his inheritance, and he had saved it from auction and in a rented truck brought it up to Massachusetts from Pennsylvania. But none of his children had wanted it, or had room for it in their straitened living quarters, and Carol, whose sense of décor, formed in hospitals, favored a clean and bare look, didn't see that their house, a stately neocolonial with more than its share of windows and radiators, had a place for it either. And so it had come to rest in the barn, waiting for someone to cherish it as Fairweather did and take it away.

Fairweather loved it because its delicately irregular old panes reflected into his mind the wobbly ghosts of his grandparents and his mother and father and Uncle Wilbur, a New Jersey dairy farmer who once had taken out his penknife and jimmied open the corner cupboard's door during a humid summer visit. Uncle Wilbur had had an accent that Fairweather never heard anymore, a soft mild wheeze formed, possibly, in patient conversation with animals. Fairweather's mother on that long-ago summer day (the air heavy with promise of a thunderstorm) had complained of being unable to retrieve something from the cupboard—the big porcelain soup tureen, perhaps, or the dessert dishes with scalloped edges like glossy thick doilies. The door was stuck, swollen by the humidity. The New Jersey relative's clever patience with his penknife had opened it and saved the day, that distant day, so that joyous exclamations arose from the visiting family members seated expectantly around the table. It was a trivial incident magnified by family closeness; it touched Fairweather to realize that in the level run of his childhood days so small a thing would stick up and cast a shadow that stayed in his memory. Uncle Wilbur's knife-marks could still be seen on the edge of the delicate door; in New England's drier climate it swung open easily.

With the enshrined china auctioned off, along with most of the rest of the family possessions, Fairweather had sentimentally filled the cupboard with his mother's small treasures—pottery vases wearing a purplish brown glaze or a matte marbled pattern like endpapers, several baskets woven of multicolored straw, boxes holding arrowheads she collected as a young farm girl, her father's hand-painted shaving mug, porcelain figurines (an elf with polka-dot wings, a baby robin in its tinted nest), some sandstone "rosestones" acquired as souvenirs of her one trip West, some Sunday-school attendance badges and field-day blue ribbons that her only son had once been awarded. Fairweather had even saved in the cupboard her last pocketbook, a plump black one with its catch on the top, its leather mildewed over the years, and inside it a pocket holding her driver's license, her Social Security and Medicare cards, and a reminder for a doctor's appointment scheduled for the week after she had, abruptly, died. All these things that had outlived usefulness, these souvenirs of a life of which Fairweather was the last caring witness, these remnants he lacked the will to discard, depressed him, deepening the low fever of depression in which even as modest a task as removing a blue doorknob loomed like a mountain almost impossible to climb.

It was difficult moving the tarpaulin to one side. The husky workmen—*dos hombres jóvenes*—had wrapped the two doors together and then leaned them so their weight pinned the covering top and bottom. The blue knob was on the inside, toward the wall. Fairweather had left his reading glasses up at house, so he could not make out head of the little screw that held knob in place. The light, through s metal-framed windows reinforced w wire and not cleaned for decades, poor. He lifted the doors toward h closer to what light there was. seemed to make out, shifting his h to gain a clearer spot of vision, there was no screw; in the hole wh one should have been was someth like a nailhead, which would have be pulled with a needle-nosed pli He hadn't brought pliers. Why everything in life so difficult? To s little better, to get the blue knob a inches farther into the open, he ho ed the doors in their encumbering w toward him, so that they were verti

Suddenly he was being pressed he had been on that street Seville, downward irresistibly, b force he could not at first und stand. Then he *did* understand: doors were falling on him. Toget the two substantial doors, fabrica in a weightier era, pressed him facedown, onto a pile of old bea boards he also, in thrift's absurd ertia, was saving; his knees scra on the rough edges, and splint gouged the side of his right hand. his brain registered these injuries felt the weight of the doors conti to fall, past him; in the second fore it happened he knew what going to happen: they would s into the top half of the corner c board, and it would topple from perch on the lower half, and would be smashed and scattere arrowheads and badges and va and baskets and figurines and nine panes of irreplaceable old w ery glass in the finely made s through door.

The crashing tumult, as he with shut eyes and stinging knees the lumber, came in stages, bad lowed by worse, worse by worst, then silence. Winter wind whispe in a high corner of the barn. A spl ter of glass tardily let go and tink to the floor. All was destroyed, sh tered, dispersed. Fairweather's br working as fast as a knitting m chine, had in a split second seen all coming. For that split second, had not been depressed.

# NO JOY IN SORRENTO

## A baseball myth strikes out

*By Pat Jordan*

The Myth is: He walked out of a garcane field with a bat over his oulder, an unknown, eighteen-year-l man-boy, 6'6", 240 pounds, with iseled muscles and a tal-t as prodigious as Babe uth's.

He was born in the sugar-ne fields of Sorrento in rthwestern Louisiana. His et were so big his aunt ora nicknamed him "Toe," maybe it was his grand-other. He learned to hit a seball by swinging a oomstick handle at beer-ttle caps tossed to him by s father. When he was elve a professional scout w him strike out seven-en of twenty-one batters d hit two home runs, one ft-handed, one right-nded, in a Little League me. He quit school at thir-en because it was "boring," d then disappeared. He ved in a trailer with riends" and cut sugarcane r a living. By fourteen, he as playing in the semi-pro gar Cane League on hard-rabble fields littered with llard-green plants and oil drums. He ayed with much older men, migrant orkers and washed-up ballplayers of stant repute, who called him "Hit Man." When he was eighteen, the scout who had seen him at twelve tracked him down and saw him hit two 400-foot home runs, one lefty, one righty, and throw 93-mph fastballs. The scout spirited him off to a Tampa Bay Devil Rays try-out where he hit ten home runs lefty and ten home runs righty. Tampa general manager Chuck LaMar told the media that "Toe" Nash had "Mark McGwire power and Doc Gooden arm." Tampa's scouting director at the time, Dan Jennings, said he was a "monster... like something out of the old Negro leagues. 'Toe' Nash is Babe Ruth." LaMar added, Nash's "life should be an inspiration to all young men." Then he signed Nash for a $30,000 bonus in September of 2000, and a few months later, in January 2001, "The Myth of Toe Nash" was born.



The Myth was started by Benny Latino, thirty-four, a part-time scout from Hammond, Louisiana, who said that discovering Toe was "the pinnacle of my short career." Then he introduced Toe to Larry Reynolds, a California sports agent, who came to represent Toe. Larry Reynolds told Toe he was living a fairy tale and then introduced him to his brother, Harold, a former major leaguer who is now an ESPN-TV commentator. Harold invited Toe to live with him in California, where he introduced him to famous big leaguers like Tony Gwynn, Eric Davis, and Shawn Green. Harold said he would help Nash get his GED because he was a "good kid. I'll be a father figure, a big brother, a friend, a place to live." Then he introduced Nash to Peter Gammons, an ESPN-TV commentator and

*t Jordan can be reached on his w... tJordanStories.com.*

otographs from "Baseball Series" by ... urtesy Lisa Sette Gallery, Scottsdale, Arizona

ill-dressed, pale-complected young man. Finally, a guy came out from the locker room and told the people to shut up and leave. Hardly anyone left the park.

Then Coach Bill Place threw a curveball. He told the crowd that the umpires had ejected Strawberry from the game for arguing balls and strikes. Strawberry, he said, was in the clubhouse, and he would be coming out to sign autographs. Suddenly, the fans were all his. Strawberry emerged, and the crowd surged toward him. Within seconds, he was surrounded by a mob of people, all pushing and shoving to get close to him. Strawberry looked terrified. He signed a few baseballs, then retreated back into the clubhouse.

Three years passed before Strawberry returned to Auburn. He made his debut with the Mets in 1983, and by the end of the season he was a star. He batted .257, with 26 home runs and 74 runs batted in, and he was named the National League Rookie of the Year. He was twenty-one years old. Two years later, he led the league in home runs, with forty-two, and batted in a hundred runs. He was also named to the All-Star team for the first of eight consecutive years. He was the most talented player on the Mets, and he knew it. He began to act like it, too. He showed up late for practice, and he sometimes left games early. He was fined by the team for missing batting practice and for failing to run out ground balls. He was suspended for a game after he failed to show up for a doubleheader. He was also suspended for a game after he failed to show up for a doubleheader. He was also suspended for a game after he failed to show up for a doubleheader. He was also

number, or driver's license, and "I don't have nothing." In plain was a bag of marijuana.

hirteen days later, Nash and a id, Dalacy Bureau, were arrested eating up a youth named Chris ale and stealing $200 from him. h told the arresting officers, kicked his ass because he was ing shit." Dalacy Bureau took $200 from Oncale and gave n twenty.

ne day later, Nash was arrested heft and simple battery and dam- o property in a fight with Charlene er trailer. When she asked him eave her trailer, he punched her en-year-old daughter, stole Char- 's purse, and broke two windows in car.

ess than a month later, on April 2000, Nash was driving with rlene when they were stopped a traffic violation. The officer id marijuana in one of Nash's s and Valium in the other. He discovered that there was an standing warrant on Nash for sing his court date in the Oncale ting. In November of the same , Nash was arrested again on a ijuana charge.

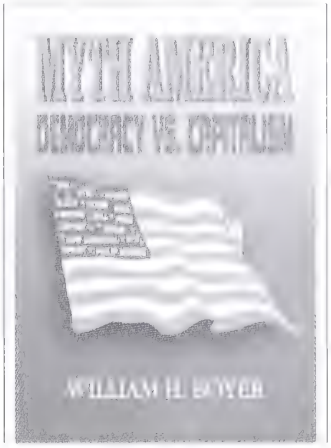
On January 30, 2001, Nash was rged with simple battery when he Charlene, who described their re- onship as "loving," got into a fight. threw a light bulb at him, and h banged her head against a wall. claimed she came at him with a fe because she was angry he was ving her to go off to play baseball, there was no mention of a knife in arrest report.

On February 18, 2001, Nash was ar- ed for a misdemeanor possession lcohol by a minor, shortly before he to go to spring training. The As- sion Parish D.A., Anthony Falter- , agreed to release Nash to Tam- Bay if Nash promised to leave the e, and Tampa agreed to supervise probation, which the team did. h spent the following months un- September in West Virginia. He n returned to Sorrento, where he arrested for robbery and forcible e on January 21, 2002, again short- efore he would go to spring train with Tampa Bay. There were ques- ns about the fifteen-year-old girl's testimony (Nash admitted he had sex with her but claimed it was consensual and that "I didn't know how old she was"), so the assistant D.A., Robin O'Bannon, reduced the charges to carnal knowledge of a minor, and Nash pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to seventeen months in the Ascension Parish jail in Donaldsonville and served half that time, which covered the entire 2002 baseball season. When he was released from jail, Tampa Bay had cut him and he was signed by the Cincinnati Reds in the winter of 2002. One month later, on January 14, 2003, Nash was arrested for second-degree battery of his white friend James Eric Thomas, who, Nash claimed, had called him a "nigger." He was jailed again and denied bail when it was discovered he had "absconded from supervision" by failing to report to his parole officer. (Nash has spent two years in jail since he turned eighteen.) If he were found guilty of either charge he would be forced to serve ten years in jail for violating his carnal-knowledge parole. That hearing was scheduled for March 19, at which time Nash would learn whether he would spend his next years wearing an orange prison jumpsuit or a baseball uniform. Even before that hearing, the Reds had had enough of "Toe" Nash and released him in February, before he had ever played an inning for the organization.

Benny Latino lives in Hammond, northeast of Gonzales, where he runs a construction company that restores houses. I met him across the street from Southeastern Louisiana University at noon, and we went for lunch at a nearby restaurant. He's a good-looking man with a wispy, reddish goatee and sunglasses perched insouciantly on his forehead. After only a few minutes talking to Latino it became clear that he dreaded this interview. After he signed Nash, which "changed our lives," he was made a full-time scout. Then, after Nash's crimes were exposed, Tampa Bay made him the fall guy for failing to inform the team of Nash's past.

"I didn't know of any trouble he's got in," said Latino, as we ate our po'-boy sandwiches. "I mean, it wasn't like I could go to his high school and check on him. Oh, I'd heard some things, but


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Latino described Nash as having "limited life experience. He [illegible] not smart enough to get in trouble on his own. If that girl flashed him her I.D., I don't think he could read it. I'm sure he didn't [illegible] laws. He's the kind of kid you've got to pick [illegible] where he's supposed to be."

Latino claimed that the Reynolds brothers "dropped the ball" with Nash every time they let him leave California to return to Sorrento. He pointed out that the rape occurred two days before Nash was scheduled to return to California, and this January's aggravated-battery charge came three days before he was supposed to return to California. The Reynolds brothers, he said, had high plans for Nash, but he was too much to baby-sit for all the time. Then, when they found out there was no movie deal after the rape charge, "they dropped him, because their big payday was gone. Everyone had their own motives with Toe. Even the D.A. [Anthony Falterman]. He's friends with Hot Rod [John "Hot Rod" Williams, a former NBA basketball player and Nash's uncle], and Hot Rod delivers the black vote. This is still Louisiana, you know."

Latino claimed that Williams convinced Falterman to release Nash on probation to Tampa Bay because of their friendship, and that it was Williams who discovered problems with the rape victim's testimony and cast a shadow over her claims.

"You gotta talk to Hot Rod," Latino said, picking up his cell phone. He got Hot Rod and told him I'd be driving down to Sorrento in an hour. Then he hung up. "Hot Rod's a good guy," he said. And then he told me that he thought many of Nash's problems stemmed from The Myth. He wished he'd never told Gammons about Toe Nash and the sugarcane fields. Latino looked pained. "The kid had so much [illegible] ed was 120 games a year for four years." Then he brightened. "I got this other kid now, the fastest kid in the Sugar Cane League. I met him in the parking lot one night after a game. His [illegible] of that action.' And he did it. I signed him for $22,000, and he's in the Sally League now." He looked at me. "He's a helluva story."

II

[illegible] for me by the baseball stadium he built in Sorrento for his team, the Williams All Stars, which Nash played for in the Sugar Cane League. It's a beautiful field that reportedly cost Williams a million dollars. He's known for giving back to the community where he grew up. He had invested the money he made in the NBA in a construction company. While his men were repairing the road alongside the field, Williams and I sat in the stands behind home plate and talked. Williams is a handsome man, 6'11", with a beard, who resembles a black George Clooney. He talked exuberantly.

"Greg's a good kid, but easily led," he said. "He has a man's body, but he's a child inside. The friends he follows let him use their car so he'll be beholden to them. One of them's in jail with him for shooting a kid in the back with a shotgun, killing him." He shook his head. "I try to help the boy, get him outta jail, tell him he can do whatever he wants to do, but he just stopped. He lost his space, ya know? Gave up on life." When Nash was about to sign with Tampa, Williams offered him the services of his lawyer and his agent, "but the boy went behind my back and signed with Larry Reynolds. He's got power of attorney over Greg's money. Where'd it go? I'm the one bailed Greg outta jail. Larry sent a check, but it bounced. Him and Harold washed their hands of Greg. They don't even return my calls. Everyone wanted to jump on the bandwagon too fast—the book deal, the movie—and then after the rape charge they distanced themselves from him, and I'm still here."

Williams's account was not entirely accurate. It was Larry Reynolds who [illegible] New Orleans defense attorney named Arthur Lemann III to fight Nash's rape charge. Williams said that was one of Nash's problems. He should have a local lawyer.

"I [illegible]," Williams said. "I found out about the [illegible] past, that she said two [illegible] guys done the same thing to her, a[illegible] I told Lemann."

When Williams finally caught breath, I told him that I wanted to terview Nash in jail, but the war wouldn't allow any media in the j Williams jumped up. "We'll see ab that," he said. He went over to his cr and came back with a short, por sweet-looking black man who co pass for a beardless Santa Claus. "T here's his daddy, Charles," Willia said. Charles Payton smiled and tur his face away, a painfully shy man. has worked for Williams for the l nineteen years. "His daddy will get y in the jail tomorrow," Williams sai

I asked Payton a few questi about his son. He gave me a sic wide smile and mumbled, "I tried talk to him. He say, 'Yes, Dadd and do what he want. I let him his own way. I couldn't get him of his friends."

I asked Payton what happened his son's $30,000. "I don't know. I ai seen none of it."

Before I left, Williams introduc me to Cedric Robertson, twenty-thre a center fielder in the Tampa orga zation. We walked out to the tall tr behind the right-field fence. Roberts a college graduate from Texas, sa "Tampa sent me to Hot Rod becau he's the guy got Toe together. I'd hea about this legend, how he hits the b 400 feet lefty or righty, and I want to compare myself to him. The fi time I saw him he hit a ball over th tree. I found out the leger was true."

The next morning at ten, I wen to the Lemann law offices in a restor old building on a cobblestone street New Orleans. While I sat in the wa ing room, the receptionist brought m a book written by Arthur Lemann I titled *Hats in the Ring: Slayer*. In Lemann recounts his privileged chil hood on a sugarcane plantation in D aldsonville, and then his most famo cases. He has defended more than few Louisiana senators and governo the Mafia Don Carlos Marcello, and priest accused of trafficking in chi pornography. Lemann got the pri acquitted by recounting his own sex al exploits when he was thirteen

ter in the courtroom. My cell
e rang. It was Larry Reynolds, who
t returned my calls in a week un-
discovered that I was in Louisiana
hat Nash was in jail again.
hat boy is trying everyone's pa-
e," said Reynolds. "I don't know
I should even bother if the boy
n't have a career." He asked me if
).A. would let Nash loose to play
ball. I told him I didn't know.
n I can't have any plans for the
ntil I hear what the D.A. will
ie said. "I can't tell teams he'll stay
trouble. I already got burned."
ter Reynolds hung up, a boyish-
ng man of thirty-four, slightly rum-
without a jacket or tie, came
he room and introduced himself
as Arthur Lemann, Nash's lawyer.
Reynolds may have thought he
Lemann III, but it was Lemann's
he IV, who handled Nash's case.
e went into the conference room
sat at a long table. The IV pro-
d his files on the rape case, and
"I first met Toe in jail. He didn't
me. He's a chameleon. He can
iet or menacing, a thug with his
ds. He had a long rap sheet. His
retain us was $25,000. Most of
onus went to us. But he didn't
Money's not real to him. He's
ature. He just doesn't care about
or wrong or think about conse-
ces. I'm not even sure he wants to
baseball player."
hen, without looking at his files,
ann IV told me about the rape
"She asked him to autograph her
" Lemann IV said. She didn't ac-
Nash of rape on her first visit to the
ce station. After she filed rape
ges, "Hot Rod did what he could,"
Lemann IV. "He told me the girl
sed two other guys of rape too. Hot
s a political player, you know. He
es contributions. The charge was
ced to carnal knowledge, and he
itted he knew she wasn't of age."
efore I left, Lemann IV gave me
es of his rape-case files. I asked if
ould represent Nash at his March
earing.
He's already used up his retainer,"
id, "but I might do the revocations
ing." He smiled. "But I'll think
e about handling his next case."
drove west out of New Orleans to
odaux, to talk to the man who would ultimately determine whether Nash ever played baseball again: his parole officer, Craig Berteau. His office was in a strip mall off St. Mary Street. The receptionist asked me if I was on parole with Officer Berteau. I said, "Not yet."

Berteau came into the lobby and led me down a hall to his tiny office. He sat behind his desk and I sat across from him. I told him what the receptionist had asked. He smiled, a slim, small man with the slicked-back hair and pencil-thin mustache of a riverboat gambler.

"My business cards are all over the parish," he said. "Nobody wants to admit they know me." I asked him about Nash's revocation hearing. He grimaced. "Aw, I can't talk about that. Let's just say he seemed mild-mannered and polite." That's how all the adults who come in contact with Nash describe him, even the officers who have arrested him. Berteau did agree to describe the hearing process, however. "The judge has the final say. I'll give him the facts. What I think. Sometimes the judge will ask for my recommendation, but he don't have to follow it." In Nash's case, Berteau's recommendation will take into account whether he will leave Sorrento, where he will reside, and with whom, and whether that person will supervise his probation. Berteau assumes that person will be one of the Reynolds brothers. If the Reynolds brothers don't present a detailed plan for supervision of Nash at the March 19 hearing, then it is a foregone conclusion Nash will spend the next ten years in jail.

I left Thibodaux at noon and drove north to Sorrento, where Charles Payton, dressed in his best jeans and a clean shirt, was waiting for me beside Williams's baseball stadium. We drove in silence to the Donaldsonville jail, a small, square, white brick building surrounded on all sides by a wire fence topped with razor wire.

Inside, Payton asked the officer behind a glass partition if he could talk to his son. A few minutes later, the warden, Bobby Webre, came out of a door. "I told you I can't allow no media to talk to him," he said. I pleaded my case. Webre looked at Payton. "Well,


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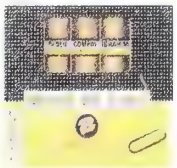

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Payton nodded.

[illegible] the bottom half of an orange prison jumpsuit moving past the cubicles. [illegible] Nash sat down across from me. He was a huge, handsome kid with braided hair. We talked [illegible] the telephone. I asked him first about his pro-baseball season.

"It was tougher than I thought," he said. "Rick Ankiel [the St. Louis Cardinals pitcher] struck me out three or four times." Then he said the toughest part of his sentence in West Virginia was living up to his myth. "I wish I coulda just played a few years like everyone else before that stuff."

Then Nash described life in jail. "We play basketball outside. Cards, dominoes. The loser got to do sit-ups. A good bit of my friends is here. The new guys ask me questions 'cause they read about me in the papers. But, shit, I wanna get out." He hung his head.

When I asked if his problems were caused by his friends, he showed a flash of anger. "It's not like anybody controls me. I can't blame no one else. I just wanna play ball so I can help my daddy and little sister. I ain't never had no money before." I glanced at his father, who'd told me he hadn't seen a penny of his son's $30,000.

"All my money's in a bank in L.A.," he said. "With Larry, whenever I need it."

Our time was almost up, so I let his father talk to him. Payton didn't say much to his son, just mumbled a few words, nodded, and we left.

On the morning of my third day I drove north to the D.A.'s office, in a Gonzales strip mall, to talk with Assistant D.A. Robin O'Bannon, who handled the rape case. Lemann IV had described her as "tough but fair."

O'Bannon is a vivacious blonde who had canceled our last meeting because she had to watch the last episode of *The Bachelorette*, which she described as "very funny." She sat behind a desk piled high with papers and said Nash was a "little hood who didn't appreciate the opportunity that was given him." She said he was lucky to get his rape charge reduced to carnal knowledge when the girl's credibility came into question. "I didn't believe we could prove a rape beyond reasonable doubt," she said. "But I do believe Nash raped her. Now the girl and her parents hate me."

I asked her if she believed Nash's problem was that he was afraid to leave Sorrento. She exclaimed, "Oh, puhleeze! He got in trouble because he's afraid to go away and play baseball for $30,000?"

Before I left Gonzales I stopped for gas. I remembered that someone familiar with the case had told me everyone dumped on the girl because she was poor white trash. I pulled out Lemann IV's files and began to read the arrest report:

At midnight of January 21, 2002, Nash, Bureau, and Thomas, known as "Money," went to the house of a seventeen-year-old girl in Donaldsonville. Bureau and Nash took turns having sex with the girl, and the other one carted off her father's safe, a Kentwood water jug filled with coins, and a CZ-Czechoslovakian semi-automatic pistol. At about 3:00 A.M., at a house in Gonzales, the alleged victim and two white male friends were drinking. One of the males called Toe for marijuana. When Nash, Bureau, and Thomas arrived they brought in the safe and the Kentwood jug. They told the girl they had pulled a "lick" in Donaldsonville. While the three were trying to crack the safe, the girl went into the bathroom. A few minutes later, she claimed, Nash and Bureau broke down the door and raped her. In her written statement to police, in a child's big, round, printed letters, she wrote,

> We were all chillin hanging around talking and stuff. I sat my drink down to go to the restroom then I went back to the livingroom someone told me that delacy and toe put something in my drink I didn't believe them so I finished it. 20 minutes later I went back to the bathroom. This time I heard a knock. [illegible] and delacy he said Are we going to [illegible] Yet When I said No toe forced [illegible] to eject me When he done delacy got on and he did the samething After that was over Toe put his you know what in my butt and he keep saying it [illegible] good huh I told them a hundred times to stop but they did not They just continue. After everything was over delacy, toe, and Eric left. [illegible] they were going to hurt me and [illegible] members if I was not quit. End

The problem with the rape [illegible] tim's testimony was that she did [illegible] give it to deputies when she was [illegible] interviewed at the police stat[ion]. The girl and her mother left, then [illegible] turned a few minutes later, and t[old] the girl told an officer she'd had [sex] with Nash and Bureau. When as[ked] if she was forced, the girl said [she] can't remember."

On the page after the arrest rep[ort] there was a petition from the co[urt] that claimed the rape victim, [a] thirteen-year-old, had been an [in]governable child and a truant. In [the] middle of that petition was the g[irl's] name, and her address in Gonzale[s]. I called the operator and got the nu[m]ber. Her father answered. I told h[im] who I was and what I was doing.

"A story on that fucking nigger," [he] said. Then he insisted I talk to [his] daughter, who was now sixteen [and] living with a boy. He gave me [the] number and I called her. She had [a] light voice of a child. "Yes, sir," [she] said, "my daddy told me to talk to y[ou]. She gave me directions to her tra[iler] and I drove there. She lived at the e[nd] of a street lined with ramshackle tr[ail]ers and rusted-out cars. There w[ere] four rusted-out "vehicles," as she cal[led] them, on her front lawn, and a nu[m]ber of mangy-looking pit bulls pro[wl]ing around as well. The girl was [sit]ting on the deck in front of the trai[ler] drinking a Pepsi. A boy, maybe ei[ght]een, skinny, with a shaved head, [was] sprawled in a chair behind her. [I] climbed up onto the deck and int[ro]duced myself. I asked the boy who [he] was. He replied, sullenly, "I'm the c[ook]. lives here."

I sat down across from the girl, w[ho] was pale and pretty and small, a[nd] asked her if she would mind recou[nt]ing the night of the rape. She began [to] talk without emotion:

"I didn't know him before th[at] night," she said. "Except as a kno[wn] drug dealer. I thought he would j[ust] come to my house, we'd pay for t[he] weed, and he'd leave. My older bro[th]er was passed out, and my young[er] brother was asleep. I had a glass of B[ac]ardi and took two Valiums. Afte[r]

took them, Toe and Dalacy put hing in my drink. I went to the oom to throw it up and they broke oor off the frame. Toe told me, is the way a bitch is supposed to eated,' all kinda stuff like that. they held me down with a hand my mouth so I couldn't scream. Dalacy did it, then Toe. I was ing real bad after it." When she xamined at a hospital the next loctors had discovered anal tears. oe had a gun he said he got in ldsonville. I seen it. He threat- to kill my little brother if I told. next day I didn't tell the police e I was scared. My mother made o back and tell 'em when I told bout the bleeding. But nobody ed me. Everybody said I was lyin', my own defense attorney [Assis- D.A. O'Bannon], because Toe famous baseball star."

ter she finished her story, I ked her and went to my car. Just e I pulled out of the driveway she over to my window. She asked or proof that I was a reporter. I ed her a letter that satisfied her. n I remembered something Le- n IV had told me.

aid, "If you didn't know Toe was ous baseball player, then why did sk him to autograph your arm?"

didn't," she said. "He autographed outt after he, you know. He wrote on it, 'Toe Nash, Fuck Number 24.'"

was already hot and sunny at 9:00 on March 19, outside the ension Parish Courthouse, a eenth-century red-brick building ed by live oaks in the sleepy little n of Donaldsonville along the s of the Mississippi River. Don- nville has a high, grassy levee to back the river, a small park with ebo, a number of partially restored bellum Colonial and Victorian es, and the Railroad Cafe, where k women wearing white aprons e oyster po'boy sandwiches and y, homemade pralines.

he second-floor courtroom of Judge n Turner Jr. was already packed to flowing. Spectators sat on worn den benches and stood along the s. Lawyers with wavy, silvery hair led back and forth with sheaves of paper. A number of beefy officers in blue stood guard over the twenty or so prisoners in orange jumpsuits who sat, handcuffed together, in two rows of long benches like church pews. Most of the prisoners waved and smiled at friends and family. They pantomimed instructions. Nash sat in the second row, his jaw in the palm of his hand as if he were bored, or sleepy, or maybe just anxious to get back to jail for lunch. When his case was called, he had to be told to stand up.

For the next thirty minutes O'Bannon and Berteau argued their case sotto voce to the judge, while Lemann IV stood between them looking bewildered. ("He had no clue what was going on," Berteau said later.) Nash stared at the floor, shifted his weight, then sat down. O'Bannon glared at him. "Please stand, Mr. Nash!" she said. He stood up again. He seemed unaware that a lot of people had an interest in his life, even if he didn't.

Judge Turner's decision was that Nash could be released *only* to Larry Reynolds's supervision in California, or else Nash would have to remain in jail where, almost certainly, his carnal-knowledge probation would be revoked and he'd go to jail for ten years.

The next afternoon I called Larry Reynolds and asked what his plans for Nash were. "Well," he said, "we're in the process of making arrangements to get the situation handled." I told him the judge wouldn't let Nash out of jail unless Reynolds supervised his probation. Reynolds blurted out, "Hell, I'm not takin' responsibility for no parole."

In June of 2003, Toe Nash was released from jail. He boarded a flight for Ontario, California, where he was met by the twenty-six-year-old college student and mother of two small children with whom he would live. She was a close friend of Larry Reynolds, whom she referred to as "my uncle." For a number of reasons, she pleaded with me not to use her real name, so I will call her, simply, Mary.

Mary was majoring in early childhood studies at a community college and worked in the business office of her church. She lived in what she described as an "affluent condo in a drug-

**Microsoft, *Harper's Magazine*, and the Boys & Girls Club of Silicon Valley congratulate the following youth for their dedication to leadership and excellence:**



Jimmy Boun is 18-years-old and recently graduated from high school in San Jose. Jimmy was selected as Youth of the Year at the Smythe Clubhouse for his dedication, dependability, and outstanding leadership. A member for 13 years, Jimmy is a new staff member at the Smythe Club and loves giving back to the kids. Congratulations, Jimmy!



Alethia Ruiz is 18-years-old and a recent honors graduate from Lincoln High School in San Jose. A member of the Northside Boys & Girls Club for 12 years, she has served as ASB president and participated in numerous programs. She currently attends college part-time and hopes to fund a new Boys & Girls Club in the city of San Jose. Congratulations, Alethia!



Randy Jones is a 10-year-old 5th grader at Miner Elementary School in San Jose and has been a member of the Miner Club for two years. Randy was selected as Youth of the Year because of his dedication to overcoming personal obstacles. He also participates in all Club activities and assists his fellow members and staff members. Congratulations, Randy!



Marissa is a 16-year-old sophomore at Independence High School in San Jose. She has been an active member of the Levin Boys & Girls Club for two years and was selected as Youth of the Year for her determination to succeed and her many contributions to the Club. Congratulations, Marissa!

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and sometimes to neither to watch golf or to a golf course."

She had first met Nash during one of his stays with Larry Reynolds. She described him then as "a very sweet, sweet guy when he was around Larry. We became friends, then our relationship turned romantic." When Nash was arrested on his carnal-knowledge charge, Mary said, "He told me he loved me and that he was innocent."

While Nash was "incarcerated," said Mary, they communicated through letters, which still led her to believe "he was a nice guy." When she learned that Nash could be released from jail after a May hearing only if someone in California took him in and monitored his behavior, and that Larry Reynolds refused to be responsible for Nash, she called the judge and then wrote him a letter stating that Nash could live with her and that she would provide a stable environment. She assured the judge that "he would never hurt anyone again." Mary is an articulate woman, and the judge was so impressed with her letter that he released Nash to her care in June.

Shortly after Nash moved in with Mary, she realized he was "a totally different person than the one I'd met." Although she didn't know it at first, Nash began a sexual affair with Mary's twenty-six-year-old neighbor only days after he'd arrived. He started coming home late at night, and when Mary questioned him, "he would become violent and force himself on me." "When I went to work, he'd sit on my front porch drinking and smoking and talking on the phone all day to his friends in Louisiana. He ran up a $1,000 phone bill, and my phone was disconnected. I told him he'd promised to get a job and go to church with me, but he never did."

When Mary had minor surgery on her hand, the doctor gave her a prescription for Vicodin. Nash stole the pills and swallowed sixteen of them. When he started to come down from the effects he became violent and "threw" Mary around in front of her children. Then, about a month after Nash moved in with Mary, he came home at 1:00 A.M., after having had sex with her neighbor. When Mary confronted him about this and told him he wasn't adhering to his curfew, "he absolutely beat me up," she said. "He grabbed my hair and shoved my face into the mattress. He ripped my small braids out of my head. I was crying when he lifted my denim skirt over my head and rammed his fingers inside me, both places. He was laughing, like it turned him on. 'This is what you want, bitch,' he said. That's when I called Jennifer and told her to come and pick him up."

Jennifer Marisnick is the director of marketing for Reynolds Sports Management. She is in her late thirties, married, with three sons. According to Mary, when Jennifer came to pick up Nash, and Mary told her what Nash had done to her, Jennifer warned Mary not to tell anyone. She told Mary no one would believe her, they'd just think Mary was jealous of Nash's relationship with Mary's neighbor, and that Mary had made up her accusations to get even. Besides, Jennifer told Mary, it would ruin her friendship with her "uncle," Larry Reynolds.

"To keep me quiet," Mary said, "Larry gave me $500. They said they'd pay my expenses, but they never did. They really used me."

Months passed, and Mary did nothing, while Nash lived in a trailer on Jennifer's property. "She told me Toe was a perfect angel," said Mary. "But he always is an 'angel' with adults." Mary said that Nash seduced adults with his soft-spoken deference, his humility, his ineffectualness, his ability to parrot back to adults what he knew they wanted to hear. But with his peers he was aggressive, violent, and sexually abusive.

When Mary began cleaning out her old phone numbers in October she came across mine. I had called her in late June to ask if Nash was living with her. She had just "kicked him out" but was too frightened to tell me this. Now she decided to call and tell me what had happened because "he's gonna hurt someone else if I don't," she said. "He turned out to be exactly what he was accused of. Exceptionally violent. He's got sexual hang-ups. It's pretty grotesque what he did to me. He should absolutely be in jail."

After speaking with Mary, I called Jennifer at Reynolds Sports Management. She told me Nash had gone directly from Louisiana in June to live with her. "He was fabulous," she said. "He went to school every day, wo out with the high school coaches course. I had to take him to sch because he didn't know how to use bus system." Jennifer insisted Nash never lived with anyone but her her family since he was released f jail in June and that "I was not aw he ever got in any trouble [out he

In late August, Nash told Jennife was "homesick" and uncomfort living with her. "My husband an ran a tight ship," she told me. "V structured. He had to do chores. began to cry. He said he just wante go home, and he didn't want to p baseball anymore. He was uncomf able with the media attention. I very disappointed, because at the t some major-league teams were in ested in him. It's a sad story. He product of his environment, and has no deep drive to change." Be she hung up, Jennifer beseeched not to write anything negative ab Toe Nash. She claimed he was ju good kid who had b misled by his peers.

On September 2, Jennifer ca Berteau and told him Nash was turning to Sorrento because he "homesick for his family." Nash rived on September 4 and immedi ly went to the home of a friend Bert described as "a hoodlum." Beca Nash was still on probation for carnal-knowledge conviction, he required to report to Berteau the ment he set foot in Louisiana. Wh he didn't, Berteau had him picked on September 5 and transported b to the Ascension Parish jail.

He remained in jail until his r hearing, on December 15, at wh time the judge released him and re stated his parole, which meant he to report to Berteau. A few months I called Berteau and asked how N was doing; he told me that Nash fulfilling the dictates of his probati He was still in Ascension Parish course, but living with his father r and playing with the Hot Rod Willi All Stars in the Sugar Cane Leag At twenty-two, he had more in co mon with his older, more world-we teammates than with the eighte year-old phenom he used to be. He tainly was no longer a myth.

# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

## LECTING TO CAVE

***ader's guide to expatriating on ember 3***

o the wrong candidate has won, and you want to leave the country. Let us consider your options.

*uncing your citizenship*

iven how much the United States nation professes to value free-, your freedom to opt out of nation itself is surprisingly lim-

The State Department does record the annual number of ericans renouncing their citi-ip—"renunciants," as they are ially termed—but the Internal enue Service publishes their es on a quarterly basis in the *ral Register*. The IRS's interest e subject is, of course, purely fi-cial; since 1996, the agency has ted ex-Americans in the hopes couping tax revenue, which in e cases may be owed for up to ears after a person leaves the ntry. In any event, the number nunciants is small. In 2002, for nple, the *Register* recorded only 403 rtures, of which many (if not most) merely longtime resident aliens ning home.

he most serious barrier to re-ncing your citizenship is that the e Department, which oversees ex-ation, is reluctant to allow citi-to go "stateless." Before allowing triation, the department will want you to have obtained citizenship or legal asylum in another country—usually a complicated and expensive process, if it can be done at all. Would-be renunciants must also prove that they do not intend to live in the United States afterward. Furthermore, you cannot renounce inside U.S. borders; the declaration must be made at a consul's office abroad.

Those who imagine that exile will be easily won would do well to consider the travails of Kenneth Nichols



O'Keefe. An ex-Marine who was discharged, according to his website, under "other than honorable conditions," O'Keefe has tried officially to renounce his citizenship twice without success, first in Vancouver and then in the Netherlands. His initial bid was rejected after the State Department concluded that he would return to the United States—a credible inference, as O'Keefe in fact had returned immediately. After his second attempt, O'Keefe waited seven months with no response before he tried a more sensational approach. He went back to the consulate at The Hague, retrieved his passport, walked outside, and lit it on fire. Seventeen days later, he received a letter from the State Department informing him that he was still an American, because he had not obtained the right to reside elsewhere. He had succeeded only in breaking the law, since mutilating a passport is illegal. It says so right on the passport.

*Heading to Canada or Mexico*

In your search for alternate citizenship, you might naturally think first of Canada and Mexico. But despite the generous terms of NAFTA, our neighbors to the north and south are, like us, far more interested in the flow of money than of persons. Canada, in particular, is no longer a paradise awaiting American dissidents: whereas in 1970 roughly 20,000 Americans became permanent residents of Canada, that number has dropped over the last decade to an average of just about 5,000. Today it takes an average of twenty-five months to be accepted as a permanent resident, and this is only the first step in what is likely to be a five-year process of becoming a citizen. At that point the gesture of expatriation may already be moot, particularly if a sympathetic political party has since resumed power.

Mexico's citizenship program is equally complicated. Seniors should

tions by Steve Brodner

know that the country does offer a lenient program for retirees, who may essentially stay as long as they want. But you will not be able to work or to vote, and, more important, you must remain an American for at least five years.

*France*

Should one candidate win, those who opposed the Iraq war might hope to find refuge in France, where a very select few are allowed to "assimilate" each year. Assimilation is reserved for persons of non-French descent who are able to prove that they are more French than American, having mastered the language as well as the philosophy of the French way of life. Each case is determined on its own merit, and decisions are made by the Ministère de l'Emploi, du Travail, et de la Cohésion Social. When your name is published in the *Journal Officiel de la République Français,* you are officially a citizen, and may thereafter heckle the United States with authentic Gallic zeal.

*The coalition of the willing*

Should the other candidate win, war supporters might naturally look to join the coalition of the willing. But you may find a willing and developing nation as difficult to join as an unwilling and developed one. It takes at least five years to become a citizen of Pakistan, for instance, unless one marries into a family, and each applicant for residency in Pakistan is judged on a case-by-case basis. Uzbekistan imposes a five-year wait as well, with an additional twist: the nation does not recognize dual citizenship, and so you will be required to renounce your U.S. citizenship first. Given Uzbekistan's standard of living (low), unemployment (high), and human-rights record (poor), this would be something of a leap of faith.

*The Caribbean*

A more pleasant solution might be found in the Caribbean. Take, for example, the twin-island nation of St. Kitts and Nevis, which Frommer's guide praises for its "average year-round temperature of 79°F (26°C), low humidity, white-sand beaches, and unspoiled natural beauty." Citizenship in this paradise can be purchased outright. Prices start at around $125,000, which includes a $25,000 application fee and a minimum purchase of $100,000 in bonds. Processing time, which includes checks for criminal records and HIV, can take up to three months, but with luck you could be renouncing by Inauguration Day. The island of Dominica likewise offers a program of "economic citizenship," though it should be noted that Frommer's describes the beaches as "not worth the effort to get there."

Speed is of the essence, however, because your choice of tropical paradises is fast dwindling: similar passport-vending programs in Belize and Grenada have been shut down since 2001 under pressure from the State Department, which does not approve. In any case, it should be noted that under the aforementioned IRS rules, you might well be forced to continue subsidizing needless invasions—or, to be evenhanded, needless afterschool programs.

*Indian reservations*

Our Native American reservations, which enjoy freedom from state taxation and law enforcement, might seem an ideal home for the political exile. But becoming a citizen of a reservation is difficult—one must prove that one is a descendant of a member of the original tribal base roll—and moreover would be, as a gesture of political disaffection, largely symbolic. Reservations remain subject to federal law; furthermore, citizens of a reservation hold dual citizenships, and as such are expected to vote in U.S. elections and to live with the results.

*The high seas*

You might consider moving yourself offshore. At a price of $1.3 million you can purchase an apartment on *The World,* a residential cruise ship that moves continuously, stopping at ports from Venice to Zanzibar to Palm Beach. Again, however, your expatriation would be only partial. *The World* flies the flag of the Bahamas, but its homeowners, who hail from all over Europe, Asia, and the United States, retain citizenship in their home nations.

To obtain a similar result more cheaply, you can simply register your own boat under a flag of convenience and float it outside the United States' 230 mile zone of economic control. There, on your Liberian tanker, you will essentially be an extension of the African nation, subject only to its laws, and may imagine yourself free of oppressive government.

*Micronations*

The boldest approach is to start a nation of your own. Sadly, these days it is essentially impossible to buy an uninhabited island and declare it a sovereign nation: virtually every rock above the waterline is now under the jurisdiction of one principality or another. But efforts have been made to build nations on man-made structures or on reefs lying just below the waterline. Among the more successful of these is the famous Principality of Sealand, which was founded in 1967 on an abandoned military platform off the coast of Britain. The following year a British judge ruled that the principality lay outside the nation's territorial waters. New citizenships in Sealand, however, are not being granted or sold at present.

A less fortunate attempt was made in 1972, when Michael Oliver, a Nevada businessman, built an island on a reef 260 miles southwest of Tonga. Hiring a dredger, he piled up sand and mud until he had enough landmass to declare independence as his "Republic of Minerva." Unfortunately, the Republic of Minerva was soon invaded by a Tongan force whose number is said to have included a work detail of prisoners, a brass band, and Tonga's 350-pound king himself. The reef was later officially annexed by the kingdom.

More recently, John J. Prisco, also of the Philippines, has declared himself the prince of the Principality of New Pacific, and announced that

discovered a suitable atoll in the rnational waters of the Central fic. As of publication, the princi- y has yet to begin the first phase onstruction, but it is already ac- ing applications for citizenship.

*rinary nations*

erhaps the most elegant solution join a country that exists only ne's own—or someone else's— gination. Many such virtual na- s can be found on the Internet, citizenships in them are easy to ire. This, in fact, was the route recently attempted by Kenneth ols O'Keefe, the unfortunate Marine. In February 2003, eefe went to Baghdad to serve as uman shield, traveling with a port issued to him by the "World ice Authority," an outfit based Washington, D.C., that has ed more than 1.2 million people ld citizens." While laying over urkey, however, he was de- d; Turkey, as it turns out, does ecognize the World Service Au- ity. O'Keefe was forced to apply replacement U.S. passport from State Department, which rather ously complied.

pon his arrival in Baghdad, eefe promptly set the replace- t passport on fire. But he re- s, to his dismay, an American.

—*Bryant Urstadt*

## OUNTER TELLIGENCE

***recommendations of the 9/11 mission are a dangerous muddle***

From time to time, the cry goes up in Washington that urgent "reform" to some part of the fed- government has suddenly become rative. Although the word "re- " evokes crusading progressives of gone era—Teddy Roosevelt, rt La Follette—at both ends of sylvania Avenue the term is usu- euphemism for either (a) making the law more to the liking of a particular industry, or (b) placating an angry public after the government has catastrophically failed to perform as it should. Whether owing to the strong will of a few lawmakers or to the collective fear of many, a slate of "reforms" is, at these moments, pushed through at breakneck speed—ostensibly to serve the public, but really to further the illusion that those in the White House and on Capitol Hill are capable of actions both daring and decisive.

This election season, polity and politicians alike have taken a keen interest in "reforming" the U.S. intelligence community, a subject that for decades languished in legislative limbo. As soon as the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (a.k.a. the 9/11 Commission) released its final report in July, leaders in both parties could hardly wait to legislate the Commission's recommendations into reality. Yet to most serious advocates for intelligence reform—particularly those who, unlike all the 9/11 Commissioners and much of the Commission's professional staff, have actually done intelligence work—this made for a distressing development, because the proposals ignored a decades-old consensus on how to achieve true intelligence reform. At a time when the public still struggled to understand the ways in which intelligence and policy failures begat the September 11 attacks and the Iraq war, the Commission put forward a set of "reforms" that, for the most part, promise not to set U.S. intelligence to rights but to confuse it even further.

The main, and most discussed, recommendation of the Commission was the creation of a national intelligence director (NID). Since 1947, the man who helms the CIA has also served as the nation's "director of central intelligence"—in theory, as the figure with authority over all fifteen agencies, spread across departmental bureaucracies, that make up the intelligence community. But because the CIA chief has not had budgetary or operational control over any agency save the CIA, he, in practice, has not been the director of central intelligence at all. For many years, the committees and commissions charged with intelligence reform have held that the process would work much better if the CIA director and the director of central intelligence roles were severed. And on this, the findings of previous bodies and that of the 9/11 Commission were in harmony.

But the previous reform reports—including a 2001 endeavor by Brent Scowcroft, the Bush-appointed chair of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board—have more or less come to the same conclusion about what the latter role should look like. The national intelligence director, these reformers agree, should have total budgetary and broad operational control of the entire intelligence community. The CIA should do nothing but collect intelligence and conduct covert operations; its Directorate of Intelligence—the thousands of agency employees who perform intelligence analysis—should be taken out of Langley and reconstituted directly under the NID. Similarly, the three main technical collection agencies—the National Security Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency—should, on the consensus view, be removed from the Department of Defense and placed, either collectively or separately, under the new NID's control.

Yet the 9/11 Commission's vision of "reformed" intelligence renders the position of the NID nearly hollow, by failing to remove the analysis groups from the CIA or the technical agencies from the DOD. The latter point is particularly crucial: the three technical agencies not only produce intelligence for an audience much wider than just the military but also account for 80 percent of the entire U.S. intelligence budget. For this very reason, the Defense Department is loath even to dis-

cuss parting with the agencies, which measurably increase its already enormous budget clout. This has been particularly true in Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon, which, in 2002, further entrenched its claim to the three by having Congress rubber-stamp the creation of a new post, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence. The appointee to this post, Stephen Cambone—a political ally of Rumsfeld's with no intelligence experience—moved quickly to consolidate his own power over the agencies. Today Cambone is so reviled that the chiefs of the agencies have let it be known, albeit quietly, that they themselves want to be removed from Pentagon command. This reality is completely ignored by the 9/11 Commission. In fact, the report goes so far as to recommend that the NID's deputy for military intelligence also be the undersecretary of defense for intelligence—meaning that person (today, Cambone) would continue to report to the secretary of defense as well as to the NID. This, of course, would court just the sort of "stovepiping" that led to the intelligence failures in Iraq.

To everyone's surprise, a reorganization along more sensible lines—one that would cede true authority to the NID, split up the CIA, and wrest the technical agencies out from under Pentagon control—was proposed in August by Senator Pat Roberts (R., Kans.), head of the Senate's intelligence committee, after weeks of post-report hearings. Immediate reaction from most corners of Washington, including the White House, the Defense Department, and congressional Democrats, ranged from outright derision to faint, awkward praise. "Senator Roberts is a good, thoughtful guy," said President Bush. "He came up with an idea, and we'll look at it."

The Commission report recommends that all clandestine and covert paramilitary operations be taken out of the CIA and be put under the Pentagon's Special Operations Command. This is particularly troubling, because the CIA's paramilitary wing exists to carry out covert or clandestine missions that are political in nature—that is, endeavors that are supposed to be completely secret, or



in which U.S. or CIA involvement is at least "plausibly deniable." By contrast, Special Operations are rarely, if ever, meant to be deniable; although their missions are unpublicized and often classified, they are not necessarily clandestine or covert. To put the seriously spooky missions under SOC's control could wind up corrupting the mission of Special Operations or could, at the very least, muddy the reputation of Special Operations forces abroad and further undermine the military's already dubious moral authority post–Abu Ghraib. Such a move also might marginalize executive and congressional oversight: whereas CIA operations require a "finding" authorized by the President and shared with congressional intelligence committees, the same is not true for endeavors undertaken by SOC. Moreover, sending uniformed soldiers on clandestine, non-military missions constitutes an act of war under international law. Even Donald Rumsfeld discouraged the shift of responsibilities in his testimony during August's congressional hearings.

The Commission's incompetence was also evident in its suggestion that a National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) be created. As described in the report, and as em-

braced by both President Bush [illegible] Democratic challenger John Ke[illegible] this would do little more than cre[illegible] an additional layer of redundant [illegible] bureaucracy. For nearly twenty ye[illegible] there has been a Counterterro[illegible] Center (CTC), staffed by office[illegible] agents, and analysts from all over t[illegible] intelligence community; from [illegible] headquarters on the sixth floor [illegible] Langley it has endeavored to coo[illegible] nate the collection and analysis [illegible] intelligence and has planned and [illegible] rected operations. Historically, [illegible] problems have been its lack of fu[illegible] ing, its lack of personnel, and the [illegible] ability of its FBI and CIA cont[illegible] gents to get along. The solution [illegible] Congress and the Bush Administ[illegible] tion was not to address any of th[illegible] problems directly but rather to c[illegible] ate, in May 2003, another mul[illegible] agency entity called the Terror[illegible] Threat Integration Center (TTIC).

Although TTIC is supposed to [illegible] alyze terrorist threats and coordin[illegible] responses, it does not, in fact, ha[illegible] any operational component or [illegible] thority; thus far, its main acco[illegible] plishment has been to siphon [illegible] useful personnel from CTC. T[illegible] 9/11 report recommends that t[illegible] practice not only continue but e[illegible] pand: it wants TTIC to *become* t[illegible] NCTC, which would "absorb a s[illegible] nificant portion" of talent from CT[illegible] and would continue not to engage [illegible] operations but only in "plannin[illegible] and "analysis." In the minds of [illegible] reer counterterrorism personn[illegible] what this does is simply create t[illegible] CTCs, which, in practice, are lik[illegible] to compete with each other: wh[illegible] the larger NCTC hordes analys[illegible] the smaller, analytically thin CT[illegible] will be forced to take orders fr[illegible] managers divorced from the day-[illegible] day realities of missions.

What makes this even mo[illegible] bizarre is that the Commission [illegible] port also wants six new subject- a[illegible] region-specific National Intelligen[illegible] Centers, which would conduct "joi[illegible] collection and analysis" using p[illegible] sonnel and resources from all t[illegible] intelligence agencies. This is part [illegible] ularly confusing to CIA personn[illegible]

se raison d'être has always been sely the collection and analysis telligence.

f course, the problem of the Commission's facile recommendations has been com- ıded by the facile manner in ch our political leaders have idered them. John Kerry simply ssued a blanket endorsement of f them. President Bush at first osed to weaken further the po- n of the national intelligence tor—by denying him or her fi- authority over budgets—but retreated to a similarly uncrit- embrace of the Commission's v. Left largely unaddressed, nwhile, is the most pressing tion of all: how to fix the CIA f, where the Directorate of In- gence is a myopic shambles, the ctorate of Operations has lost ost all its veteran officers within ast decade, and the Directorate dministration has been under- ed by years of ill-considered ructuring." The alternative, as osed by Senator Roberts, ld be to split the CIA into e entirely distinct agencies, one devoted to espionage, an- r to analysis, and another to ntific and technical research development—though at this t the intelligence bureaucracy entrenched that such a move be too radical to implement.

ne wisest course of action would o dust off the reports of our pre- is studies on intelligence re- n—the Hoover commissions the late 1940s, early 1950s, 6's Church Committee, and 's Boren-McCurdy bills, among rs—and heed their conclusions, y of which have never been im- ıented. But in an election year, fficials of both parties under- d, endorsing the 9/11 Commis- 's recommendations wholesale is most politically prudent ap- ch. In the parlance of Washing- after all, this is what "reform" y means.

—*Jason Vest*

# THE OSAMA ENDORSEMENT

***Understanding the most dangerous constituency***

Who do the terrorists want to be president? Americans who hate evil can be forgiven for discounting the complexity of the question. We like our politics straight. When we see bumper stickers, like those distributed at Kentucky G.O.P. fund-raisers this summer, proclaiming that "KERRY IS BIN LADEN'S MAN/PRESIDENT BUSH IS MINE," we admire the clarity of the sentiment, without taking into account that the terrorist's choice might in fact be more nuanced. Politicians, in their rightful disdain for ambiguity, are even more likely to underestimate the subtlety of the terrorist mind. More and more of them are staking out the rhetorical terrain pioneered by U.S. Representative Tom Cole of Oklahoma last spring: "If George Bush loses the election," he said, "Osama bin Laden wins the election. It's that simple."

But is it really? Yes, Osama is evil, and therefore a reliable contra-indicator of what, or who, is good. If he is for a particular candidate, we certainly ought to be against that candidate. But figuring out who Osama actually prefers is a far more difficult matter. He has never openly endorsed any U.S. politician, nor has he made clear what characteristics he might be seeking in a candidate for president. One might assume, with Representative Cole and the Kentucky G.O.P., that Osama would prefer John Kerry, on the premise that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend"—Bush already being Osama's enemy. And yet Kerry has made clear that he would, if anything, widen the campaign against terrorism in general and against Al Qaeda in particular.



Even concerning the issues on which the candidates are more clearly divided, it is unclear where Osama himself would come down. Take gun control. On the one hand, Osama might prefer a Kerry administration, which presumably would attempt to tighten gun-control laws and thereby make the day-to-day work of terrorists a little bit safer. On the other hand, Bush might make it easier for the terrorists themselves to get the weapons they need. Who is to say which advantage Osama would find more compelling? The "character issue" also cuts both ways. Is Kerry, with his Massachusetts-style liberalism, more sympathetic to terrorist issues than Bush? Or would Osama feel more comfortable with a fellow fundamentalist in office? The point is, we can only guess.

The complexity of the Osama endorsement is compounded by the fact that Osama is a terrorist, and therefore may not be completely candid about his intentions. It is even possible that he will attempt to play our expectations against us. If he really wants Kerry to win the election, for instance, he might try to trick voters with reverse psychology by endorsing Bush. Or he might express an equal preference for both Bush *and* Kerry, in the hopes of boosting a third-party candidate—if not Ralph Nader, then perhaps Prohibition Party candidate Gene Amondson. Nevertheless, Osama's choice remains a tantalizing bellwether for American voters, who hope to perfect the nation in the mirror image of his boundless evil.

The most frustrating barrier to knowing Osama's mind is that his preferred method of political communication, mass murder, is an imprecise medium. If Al Qaeda were to attack before Election Day, what would it tell us about Osama's presidential favorite? There are now two entirely conflicting theories. For years, we believed that terrorism created a kind of reverse Stockholm Syndrome, causing the electorate to disproportionately revere the leaders fortunate enough to be in power at the time of an attack. But the Al Qaeda attack on Madrid last March, and the electoral defeat three days later of Spanish prime minister José María Aznar, changed all of that. Now we know that an attack might cause voters to throw out the very politicians under whose leadership that attack occurred, making terrorism an overt threat to incumbents everywhere. Complicating matters even further is the fact that terrorists *know* those theories exist and could act on either one of them—or, because they are terrorists, on some other premise entirely. In terms of game theory, the possibilities are endless.

The administration is not unaware of these intricacies. Since at least March, national-security officials have been working to clarify our understanding of the Osama endorsement and to help voters know how best to support their country this November. Unfortunately, their efforts have delivered mixed results.

In April, for instance, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice warned that we must "take very seriously the thought that the terrorists might have learned, we hope, the wrong lesson from Spain." Her statement, though brief, is a masterpiece of subtle and layered logic. On first reading, she seems to be worrying that Al Qaeda learned the wrong lesson from Spain—i.e., learned that terrorist attacks are pro-incumbent, when in fact we now know they are anti-incumbent. But careful readers, Osama among them, will note that Rice actually "hopes" Al Qaeda has learned the wrong lesson. What could that mean? If Rice expects an attack, and she *hopes* Osama thinks an attack is pro-incumbent, then the implication is that she hopes Osama wants to keep Bush in office. This may seem cynical, but in fact it is a perfect demonstration of Rice's special genius. Beneath it all, the national security adviser is trying to *take out* Osama. That is, if Osama thinks Rice wants him to "endorse" Bush, then maybe he won't—thereby saving untold lives.

In July, however, Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge once again muddied the waters. He warned that "Al Qaeda is now moving forward with its plans to carry out a large-scale attack in the United States in an effort to disrupt our democratic process." Then, citing Madrid, he added that "we know that they have the capability to succeed, and they also hold the mistaken belief that their attacks will have an impact on America's resolve." Rather than resolve the ambiguity of the Osama endorsement, Ridge's statement only deepened it. Did Ridge think Osama was "mistaken" in his belief that his attacks could disrupt "our democratic process"? Or did he believe that Osama had "the capability to succeed"? And what did Ridge mean by "our democratic process" in the first place? One might assume that he meant the election, but of course Spain held its election without much difficulty three days after the attack, and the new president has taken office with little controversy. So what is the "process" Al Qaeda has in mind? More to the point, what is the process that Tom Ridge *thinks* Al Qaeda has in mind? The questions continue, circles within circles, and despite Rice's best efforts we remain without answers.

Probably the most important issue facing Americans and terrorists alike in the upcoming election is the war in Iraq. One of George W. Bush's applause lines in the State of the Union speech last January was that Al Qaeda "declared war on the United States, and war is what they got." This sort of pandering to the terrorists would seem to give Bush a clear advan in the Osama endorsement sw stakes. And yet Kerry, too, has that we will remain in Iraq for long term. Indeed, he says he w bring *more* nations into the ef In any case, given our histor nonpartisan war transitions. V nam, for instance, was fought u two Democrats and two Repu cans. Osama can be reason confident that, Republican or D ocrat, the next occupant of White House will be sure to co ue supporting the kind of terror that Al Qaeda has worked so h years to put in place.

Given that knowledge, then, taking into account the essential honesty of terrorists, how can ever know for sure what an at would mean? Would it be a ple "steady leadership in a tim change," or for "strength at ho respect abroad"? And for that m ter, what if there is no att Would it be a sign of approval f Osama—and therefore an endo ment—of whoever was leading polls at the time of the non-att Or, given that we might *expect* be an endorsement, would not non-attack then be, in fac counter-endorsement?

Perhaps we will never know. it is to the credit of America's l ers that they continue the strugg plumb Osama's desire. We a hopeful nation, and though we not find all the answers by Nov ber, we must believe that som we will know Osama's wishes as as we know our own.

—*Luke Mi*

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*Bryant Urstadt's last article for* Har Magazine, *"A Four-Year Plague," peared in the May issue.*

*Jason Vest is a senior correspondent* The American Prospect *and a tributing writer for the* Boston Phoe

*Luke Mitchell is a senior editor of* H er's Magazine. *His last article fo magazine, "Blood for Oil," appear the July issue.*

# EW BOOKS

*John Leonard*



n his messy novel *Headbirths* 1982), Günter Grass contemplates ld movies, dead friends, East Asia, nan politics, declining birth rates, a pair of well-meaning civil ser- s who can't decide whether they a child and seek to imagine how ry would punish them. So Harm Dörte sign up at the Sisyphus Trav- gency for "destitution as a course udy" and are promptly booked the slums of Bangkok and Bombay. ch a course in destitution is the e curriculum for the people we in Seth Koven's SLUMMING: JAL AND SOCIAL POLITICS IN TORIAN LONDON (Princeton, 95), a bountiful, provocative, and nt "genealogy of benevolence and l welfare," with more than enough frighten the horses. Like those of Harm and Dörte, the motives of these journalists, novelists, philanthropists, liberal reformers, political economists, and Christian evangelicals were mixed, but not necessarily ignoble. Among them, yes, there were dilettantes, vultures, and voyeurs, as well as confused men and women who didn't know exactly why they had crossed the border from Mayfair to Whitechapel—from rich to poor, clean to dirty, genteel to outcast, stately home and Oxford spire to night shelter, workhouse, soup kitchen, male brothel, and "moral panic"—except that they may have intuited a relationship between "eros" and "altruism." But as much as most of them felt obliged to feed, house, and rehabilitate the poor, they seem also to have needed to complicate and rehabilitate, perhaps even to revolutionize, themselves.



This is all right with Koven, and with me too. What they achieved amazes, whether they meant to or not. To spend time with them is to dream along with nineteenth-century pioneers in welfare policy, social services, urban planning, realist novels, tabloid journalism, emergent feminism, and drag. Say hello to Lloyd George, William Gladstone, and H. H. Asquith, all of whom slummed before they arrived at 10 Downing Street. Meet Elizabeth Banks, the American "girl" journalist whose undercover posing as a servant brought the class war home and got more women hired by British papers. Consult the fiction of Olive Schreiner, Margaret Harkness, and Vernon Lee, whose lesbian novel *Miss Brown* alarmed Henry James. Sort out the theories, practices, and "subjectivities" of such amateur and professional sexologists as Havelock Ellis and John Aldington Symonds. Look through the eyes of Susan Sontag (or, maybe better, Calvin Klein) at the erotic photographs of needy little boys that Dr. Thomas John Barnardo "falsified" to solicit monies for his charities.

Mention is made of Peter Pan, socialism, the Salvation Army, the Elephant Man, and George Orwell (down and out and homophobic). Then, as now, those trying to improve things were ridiculed by those too comfortable to be bothered to do beans; "slumming" as a pejorative anticipated "radical chic." But at least in the 1880s they felt bad when they didn't live up to their quaint codes of honor, stewardship, obligation, and respect. The difference today, after the application of such stigmatizing labels as "undeserving poor," "lumpenproletariat," "family pathology," and—the current favorite—an "underclass" consisting entirely of welfare mothers, crackhead dads, and wolfpack kids, is that our

*the Arches (The Homeless Sleeping Under London Bridge)*, 1872, by Gustave Doré. © AKG images.
*ne Party* (detail), 1871, by Frederick Daniel Hardy. © Christie's Images Limited 2003.

culture not only measures everybody by his or her ability to produce wealth but morally condemns anyone who fails to prosper, under the twisted-sister sign of a theology of greed.

Pick your theology. More than one, including the Almighty Buck, features a Sphinx. In Egypt there were the cults of Isis, Serapis, and Tutu. In the Bible cherubim protected the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. Count on Oedipus to show up on a Greek amphora with the Sphinx he would unriddle. You've doubtless noticed that Narasingh, the fourth avatar of Vishnu, is a Man-Lion. A Gustave Doré Sphinx consoles an angel on a rock overlooking the destruction of the Paris Commune. De Quincey, Emerson, Unamuno, and Borges all claimed to find in the Sphinx a symbol of themselves, whereas Hegel insisted that he/she/it was a symbol of symbols, a sign of signs. Besides which, it is art, furniture, and fetish. Halfway through Willis Goth Regier's delightful BOOK OF THE SPHINX (Nebraska, $35), there is a picture of a 50-schilling Austrian banknote that features Freud being examined by a Sphinx, perhaps dubious about the analytic relationship between money and feces. In James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, we find "Sphoenix"—"a one-word story with a happy ending."

*Book of the Sphinx* is happy all the way through: a grab bag, treasure trove, and star chart of the mythic monster's whereabouts in art, religion, history, and literature, with the winks, nods, footnotes, bird trills, and memory-bank shots of a scholar so intimately at home that he seems, like his subject, to be playing with his food. The illustrations are as sly as the text—postcards from Giza, but also coins, stamps, helmets, sheet music, and cigarette cards; paintings by Ingres, Gerome, and John Singer Sargent, but also Marvel comics—and the text, organized in such whimsical categories as "Body," "Mind," "Secrets," "Eros," and "Exit," speaks in many tongues, from Sophocles to Ted Hughes, stopping along the way to get an earful from Charlotte Brontë, Lord Byron, Chekhov, Descartes, Erasmus, Flaubert, Goethe, Kafka, Nietzsche, Ovid, Proust, Turgenev, Valéry, and the rough beast himself, W. B. Yeats, while also listening to the Sphinx music of Black Sabbath, Bob Dylan, and Richard Wagner.



We are as perplexed before this pile of obdurate meanings as Melville's Ahab, who stood on his Oedipal peg leg and addressed the white whale as a Sphinx. Silent, feline, cold, bored; man, woman, lion, eagle, angel, and sun—bicycle! spark plug! "Ambiguous as dreams and deceptive as introspection," says Regier, my hero of culture for the month of October, "flouting analysis and defying art, Sphinxes lurk as Sphinxes do, patient, cunning, and cutthroat." By "cutthroat," he also means: "The Sphinx takes your breath away, one way or another."

By now, you'd think Pocahontas would have given up her every last secret. But as often as she starred in John Smith's memoirs and in every early-American home-porn movie and colonial wet dream about white settlers and dark beauties in the forest primeval, and as much as she would later be reinvented and ideologized in the revisionist texts of the 1960s and '70s as a noble-savage victim of a European land grab, the daughter of Powhatan (chief of chiefs among Algonquins on the north shore of the Pamunkey, in what is now Virginia) has almost always served as a dresser's dummy for the hat, garters, cloak, and beads of myth. Which means that she gets lied about a lot.

Camilla Townsend, an associate professor of history at Colgate who writes with a sharp sword and a crackling whip, refuses to believe anything just because so many people have repeated it. In POCAHONTAS AND THE POWHATAN DILEMMA (Hill and Wang, $23), Townsend goes back to the seventeenth-century archives, reads around in the British journalism and poetry of the time (Ben Jonson sa as "a princess," and a great one, c forth of a tavern" on her ill-fated visit to England), in the New W diaries of the Spaniards, and in records the Jesuits kept of their journ among Iroquois, sorts out likely from the bunk, and is frank w us every time she guesses.

What emerges is an unpretty ture of a Jamestown colony t thought it could get away with ing local Indians as serfs, a J Smith who never met an Ind maiden who didn't want to save skin and mate with him. Powhatan strategy of marrying the nubile females in the family powerful rivals for diplomatic p poses, and a young woman, misch vous, bossy, athletic, who no m married for love than she conver to the white man's God out seraphic rapture. As the colon switched tactics, kidnapping V like Pocahontas, holding th hostage for ransom—often an change for food Jamestown coul grow—or, failing such piratical t ute, casually killing them, so Po hontas found it wise to improve English as well as wed one, ship off to John Rolfe's mother coun to act as her father's eyes, goodw ambassador, and espionage age and discovered to her dismay t there were too many Europea with too much technology, for own people to prevail.

It might have been different if Algonquins had sat around inve ing stuff instead of hunting and f ing and stripping bark and tann buckskin—if, that is, agriculture developed eleven thousand years in the Virginia Tidewater as it in the Fertile Crescent. But Po hontas's ancestral peoples hadn't need for iron smelting or weapo workshops until the blue-eyed Chi tians sneaked up behind them, a by then it was too late: "The ga bling game they were forced to p was a dangerous one," says Tow send, "and they had one hand, ev two, tied behind their backs at times. It is important to do them honor of believing that they their best."

# A VIE RESHORRIFICQUE

## belais revisited

*William H. Gass*

ssed in this essay:

*antua*, by François Rabelais. Translated by Andrew Brown. Hesperus Press, 004. 142 pages. $13.
*igruel*, by François Rabelais. Translated by Andrew Brown. Hesperus Press, 004. 121 pages. $13.



o what does our ancient author say is the shape of Socrates' nose? "A nose of such importance, al- well into other people's business, it be imagined to be sharp as a e, pointed like a whittled stick, rilled in the style of the truffle pig

so as to capture the least whiff of opinionated puffery and to disinhale when the odor proves to be misleading—in truth a *nez pointu*, the phrase our esteemed authority uses for the description of his mentor and his muse; however, Andrew Brown, the most recent translator of Rabelais's masterpiece, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, knows that Socrates is never represented thus but was given pop eyes and a snub nose whenever his visage was set in stone, so he silently corrects the text and blunts the knife—"... with his snub nose, his eyes like a bull's, and the face of a madman." Besides, John Cowper Powys, who Englished his favorite selections in 1948, set the precedent in nose snubbing. One wonders how many such corrections Brown has made, tacit as a Trappist.

Rabelais writes for the convivial, and consequently for those who must have poisoned their livers and contracted the pox, because syph was the New World's swap with Europe in their exchange of epidemics; it was the sixteenth century's AIDS, heedless pleasure's penance. And although the clap can now turn on lights, alcohol has never changed its ways. Thus he welcomes us to his feast on what might be Inflation Sunday during Hypocrites' Holiday in the year of the Warmonger, two thousand four, or maybe fifteen thirty-two, it's much the same, since swilling, swiving, corruption and conniving, fanaticism, bigotry, and bloodshed haven't changed, and the sports bars are still full of opinion.

For a work that is rumored to be loose as a noodle, *Gargantua* moves immediately to make significant allusions. The first is to Plato's *Symposium* and the speech of Alcibiades in praise of his mentor, Socrates, whom he compares to an apothecary's box that is adorned with improbable figures, from harpies and satyrs to flying goats and saddled ducks, each image designed to provoke mirth, yet a box whose interior is as precious as a casket of the Magi, full of... well, among our several renderers there is some difference of opinion. Thomas Urquhart, the earliest and most esteemed translator (1653), offers "Balme, Ambergreese, Amamon, Musk, Civet, with several kindes of precious stones, and other things of great price," and our aforesaid Andrew Brown follows suit, overall more obedient to the text, whereas Penguin Books' J. M. Cohen replaces "precious stones" with "mineral essences," perhaps an improvement; however, Jacques Le Clercq (whose 1936 version spoke so persuasively to me when I was a tad because it was the translation in the Modern Library, the first library I knew) is expansive and explanatory, with "balsam of Mecca, ambergris from the sperm whale, amomum from the cardamon, musk from the deer and civet from the civet's arsehole—not to mention various sorts of precious stones, used for medical purposes, and other invaluable possessions."

Rabelais does that to you. He fills you with wind. You outgrow several sizes. Words multiply in your mind immediately the way ants invade a larder, soon more plentiful than the grounds that were spilled on the kitchen counter while making morning coffee. In *Gargantua*'s day words were revered, despised, traded, banned, liberated,

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*lui jettaient en la bouche l'un après l'autre continuellement de la moutarde (Gargantua the other people ally shoveled mustard into his mouth)*, illustration for Book 1, Chapter 24 of Rabelais's *Gargantua*
tave Doré © The Art Archive/Collection Claude Goumain Paris/Dagli Orti

loved. At the wine-soaked tables of the inns, one exchanged views, lies, brags, and obscenities as the market bargaining went on in a dialect as local and delicious as their greens; in the doss-houses, grunts were gratefully given and received; at church, the air was Latinated and, like the light, stained its priestly columns, brightened its aisles or occluded niches, and lengthened the grief in kneeling figures. Even though the world was everywhere widening to reveal fresh continents to be discovered and despoiled, heathen souls to be sought out and saved, ordinary life was the richest land so far claimed for any kingdom, because along with common things came their common names, and with the names came common knowledge: mud puddle, haymow, oxen, minnow, lettuce, fart, smirk, seaport, wink.

Books were rare and books were revered. The opened cover compared to the opened eye, to a chest of treasure, a doorway to the divine, the cork in a bottle; however, books bore error on through time as well as truth, opinion, hypothesis, and conjecture, and they could fuddle the mind as well as wine. Mistakes, fakes, and falsehoods, in an opportune place, can become history, as the many mistranslations camped out on sacred tomes attest. Alcibiades did not compare Socrates to an apothecary's box but to those "Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries' shops . . . when their two halves are disjoined, they are seen to possess statues of gods within." The actual reference is no less suitable to Rabelais's purposes than the mistaken one, yet about it the translators gather, honor-bound to preserve and repeat it.

And if we broke free of words to inspect the philosopher in person, as if that were possible, we would still have a book bag for a head, eyes colored by custom, commonplace, and superstition. He would not "look" wise, as if we knew what wisdom wore to appear stupid—furrowed brow or quizzical smile, bald because his head steamed. "You would not have given the peel of an Onion for him," Urquhart says; you'd not have offered "an onion skin," declares Le Clercq; not "the top of an onion," Powys puts it; nary "a shred of an onion for him," Cohen has it, or "you wouldn't have given the shred of an onion skin," in Brown's opinion, accepting most that [illegible] the tuffet; while Rabelais, if we want to be met with the source, wrote, "n'en eussiez *Moine in confectly* [illegible]," not realizing that *coupeau* would become obsolete, and that his metaphor would be lost: "you would not give the hilltop of an onion for him."

This is a minor matter indeed, but it is interesting to note that Powys, who creeps closest to his quarry, has complaints of Samuel Putnam, whose translation he praises and many favor, for ruthlessly updating the text, thus making it more readable for his generation while depriving Rabelais's own time of its age and voice. And, I might add, some of his art. Who cares whether Grandgousier or Greatgullet (father of Gargantua) was a rollicking blade and a superlative toper, as one translator describes him; or—since there is no reference to anyone's gullet in the passage I'm looking at—was just a good fellow in his time and notable jester, according to another; or, as Andrew Brown describes him for us, was instead "a real barrel of laughs"? Brown also advises us to "check out" texts and knock back drinks, as we are wont now to do. He makes us feel comfortable in the Renaissance, as if it were putting on its show in our living room. Certainly Brown's version is more zippy and even more accurate than many. Picky points perhaps. But imagine these modest disagreements multiplied through five volumes and a hundred thousand times.

In his lively introduction to *Pantagruel*, Brown points out, à propos the same contrast between Socrates the Silenus and Socrates the Sage who opens the work, that interpretation, in Rabelais's day, was a dangerous undertaking, as much for what you might be thought to be learning as for what you actually learned; but because he is translating a later version of the text, one that Rabelais judged to be more prudent to publish than the original, there are bits, offensive to Church authorities, omitted.

Jean Plattard, in *The Life of François Rabelais*, thinks that Rabelais was born around 1494 on his father's farm, two gunshots from the Abbey of Seuilly, and a league [illegible] Chinon, the town where he grew [illegible] neath his father's wing until he be[illegible] his studies to become a Franci[illegible] monk. By the time he pens *Panta*[illegible] of (of which *Gargantua* is a prec[illegible] he is familiar with at least four pr[illegible] sions and one art: the law from hi[illegible] ther, the priesthood and medicine [illegible] their practice, the New Learning [illegible] ancient sages, and poetry through [illegible] epistolary exchanges in verse with [illegible] poet Jean Bouchet. What a stoc[illegible] technical terms, argument forms, [illegible] higher powers Rabelais could emp[illegible] parody, and appeal to; what gramm[illegible] ical categories, rhetorical sche[illegible] rimes *équivoques* and *batelées* (lines [illegible] biguous and overloaded as a bo[illegible] what changes rung from words [illegible] those from bells he must [illegible] sixty-four verbs in the imperfect te[illegible] necessary to roll a barrel out of tow[illegible] a cluster of shove and sound—[illegible] *tournoit, viroit, brouilloit, garbouil*[illegible] *hersoit, versoit, renversoit . . .*"—an[illegible] on—"*nattoit, grattoit, flattoit . . .*"—[illegible] in English, we might group "cr[illegible] clash, mash, smash, slash, bash, tr[illegible] gnash . . ." to depict the passage of [illegible] armored vehicles through a villag[illegible]

Later in his life, in his role as a ph[illegible] cian, Rabelais often traveled to L[illegible] or Rome as a part of Cardinal Jean [illegible] Bellay's retinue, but as a young p[illegible] he did his rounds in the region of[illegible] birth, *la molle et douce Touraine*, an[illegible] the regal town of Chinon itself, o[illegible] capital to a shrunken France (15[illegible] 29), known to tourists now for on[illegible] Joan of Arc's early exploits. Scho[illegible] have frequently remarked Rabel[illegible] intensive knowledge of the region[illegible] cloth, its donkeys, its windmills, [illegible] height of its hemp, its "sweet, e[illegible] warm, wet and well-soaked soil," [illegible] how well he rendered them all: tow[illegible] towers, lanterns, rivers, walls, in p[illegible] erly apportioned paragraphs. "Dres[illegible] in his Benedictine's habit, he mi[illegible] with the people more than any wr[illegible] of his time," Plattard writes. "He kn[illegible] the art of loosening the tongues of [illegible] cattle-drover in the field, the artisan[illegible] his workshop, the merchant in the i[illegible] He can, on occasion, make use of th[illegible] dialect, their familiar metaphors, th[illegible] customary swearwords." *Gargantua* [illegible] *Pantagruel* are so drenched, like [illegible] soil, in locales, that Albert Jay N[illegible]

ed a chatty travelogue to *A Jour- to Rabelais's France* (1934).
e heroes of the New Learning—
ıning with Guillaume Budé,
ıas More, Desiderius Erasmus, his
esignated student, Rabelais, and
ring in the great Baroque out-
; of Michel Montaigne, Robert
ɔn, and, later, Sir Thomas
ne—were devoted multilingual
rs; however, in them, as often as
he citations were offered as ex-
es of ignorance and superstition
e part of their authors and held
warnings to the unwary: what
been thought is now so little
ght of.
quote pagan authors is more than
suggests that there are other au-
ies than have been favored by
cholastics, and to write about
in the vulgate is to invite read-
look on pages that the Church
esolutely kept from popular pe-
—as if, on their own, such read-
ould be prone to misconstrue,
g a path that led straight to the
. Moreover, it had been a habit
ıgh many centuries to consult books rather than inspect afresh what the books were presumed to be about; to cite authorities, to quote the Fathers of the Church, to pit one scholar's paragraphs against another's; thus to debate each issue inside the precincts of the word, and this lawyer-like practice was hard to break.

If Alcibiades can serve up Socrates as a sample of the wise fool, and Rabelais's reader can then remember how the renowned Erasmus has praised folly while wondering who the truly foolish are, then perhaps I may make my own reminder of how frequently it was felt that wild unseemly flatulated words would surely issue from a similarly grotesque and corpulent person. Gargantua, our hero here, is as fulminatious as his flesh is flabby, and only after decency has been drilled into him can he deliver an admirable speech in a restrained and balanced Ciceronian style. Shakespeare's Falstaff and Molière's Tartuffe are outstanding examples, as is the lesser-known character, Vanderhulk, of Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveler*, a grotesque whose existence I was made aware of by Wayne Rebhorn in *The Emperor of Men's Minds* (another citation within a citation, worth double points). This fellow "had a sulphurous, big, swollen, large face like a Saracen, eyes like two Kentish oysters, a mouth that opened as wide every time he spake as one of those old knit trap doors, a beard as though it had been made of a bird's nest plucked in pieces which consisteth of straw, hair, and dirt mixed together." One must remark, by the way, that Rabelais would never mess up his line with real redundancy the way Nashe did—"big, swollen, large" indeed. No, Rabelais's redundancies redound. And what is a "knit trap door"? Is it a concealing rug? a confederate of the tea cozy? or a round sphincter-type opening that closes behind a netted fish? To meet new words is to encounter new wonders.

Nor should we be deceived, as we read—by coarseness, indulgence, logorrhea—to suppose there is nothing but mooning going on in *Gargantua* or *Pantagruel*, naught but cocking a


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*he role of a writer is not to y what we can all say, but hat we are unable to say."*
*Anaïs Nin*

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stock at authority and other small boy pranks, or simply exuberance fizzing from bottle end and fundament like an organized spritzelation of shaken soda. The point of the opening reference to Socrates' appearance and the reality of his payoff remains unaffected: this book will appear woolly and rough, its course haphazard, but its sense is consistent, unified, pure yet iridescent as though silk had swallowed water, and it has been set down more in weeping than in writing, more in despair than in glee, more when sober than when drunk; and though drunkenness is a frequent occupation of its actors, we should not fear for an actual stagger, because stage cups are always full of tea. Our author is besotted, but by words; he is intoxicated with learning, with his own strength; walls are atumblin' down, those of castle and cathedral, city and convent, college and library.

At the close of Plato's banquet, at daybreak, when all the evening's revelers and rhetoricians have passed out, Socrates rises from among the sleepers and goes to spend the balance of the day in his customary manner, for the philosopher feels no fuddle, and reason does not weary of its work; nor will it here, because the philosopher's distant student has also wakened early, left the priestly functions toward which his studious nature had initially inclined him, and begun his service as a physician, consequently as a scholar of Hippocrates and Galen, among the Greeks the more empirically inclined. Now to Rabelais's dislike of traditional schoolmen is added a disdain for the traditional physician: "These fellows get their experience by killing folks (as Pliny once complained); and they are a source of greater danger, even, than any that comes from disease itself."

Princes and their petty yet ruinous wars, indolent hypocritical monks and their parasitical lives, the theologians of the Sorbonne who misuse reason and disgrace intelligence, the venerators of holy relics and the pious pilgrims, purveyors of popular superstitions of every stripe—these are the objects of our author's scorn, as it should be our concern to steer clear of them today, though they may call their sects professions, and their parties by newer noble-sounding names.

Rabelais's anger at those who are tethered to their texts is evidence of his own released mind, but it is partly paradoxical, since he is as bookish as they. He, however, is eating fresh fruit from old trees instead of winter's barreled apples, and we can turn to him as he returned to Plato and Socrates. *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*, so far in the past, as comets come, can arrive like a new age to surprise our eyes. These works seem written for today; they are as relevant, and possibly as futile. Between the brackets insert your favorite bêtes noirs. "[These scholars and medics] can well enough see the lightboat of lies battered and leaking in every part; yet they insist upon retaining, by force and by violence, those works to which they have been accustomed from their youth up. If one endeavours to snatch these away from them, they feel that he is, at the same time, snatching away their very souls." Did the humanists not feel similarly violated when the Church arrested their Greek books? And burnt their pages, set fire to their authors, and lit their readers too, as Brown notes. After Rabelais edits a new edition of Hippocrates he has a Latin couplet placed upon its title page that reads: "Here is the overflowing fount of healing lore. Drink here, unless the stagnant water of a ditch tastes better to you."

Scholars have noticed the metaphoric connection of science with salubrious imbibing in Rabelais, though it must be remembered that reading a book of symptoms is not the same as taking a pulse. "Drink" is what Gargantua cries as he's being born, instead of the customary "waa waa"; the third and fourth books are given over in large part to a search for the Divine Bottle as if it were the Holy Grail; and in the fifth part, whose authenticity is disputed, the oracle of the *Dive Bouteille* delivers wisdom's secret, which is—no surprise from the lips of a bottle—Drink! Moreover, Pantagruel makes a pre-Rabelaisian appearance in a medieval mystery play, where his role is that of an impish devil who gathers salt from the seashore to shake down the throats of snoring drunkards.

His salary at the Great Hospital of Lyon did not achieve jingle, and, deprived of the Church's

free room and board or the indulg
of some courtly master, Rabelais
have often slept without cove
companion, eaten tack, and d
from a dry glass. So straitened
cumstances probably alerted hi
the possibility of a windfall of his
when a small book, the illegiti
offspring of the Arthurian lege
anonymously transcribed from the
tradition, sold more copies in
months than Bibles in nine years.
told the story of how the magi
Merlin created a family of giants
of medieval superheroes, out of
bones of two male whales, a sprink
clippings from Queen Geniève's
plus a *soupçon* of blood from one
Lancelot's wounds, to help out
Arthur through his many tribulat
Donald Frame tells us in his st
*François Rabelais* (1977), that the
ing pair, Grant-Gosier (or the
Gullet that Le Clercq has insiste
inserting into his translation wh
er possible) and Galemelle (wh
Gargamelle, bears Gargantu
eleven months in Rabelais's ve
before dumping him with a th
into a nest of citations that prove
lengthy gestations are necessar
masterpieces) . . . well, the two
their way between grasping paret
ses bearing their brute of a boy o
back of a city-sized mare "thr
France to join Arthur; but the
ents"—who suffer a fever like a w
along the way—"die at Mont-S
Michel for lack of a purgative. M
transports Gargantua to Arthur
cloud; fighting for Arthur, Garga
conquers the Gos and Magos
Dutch and the Irish, and a tw
cubit giant in single combat. Fir
after two hundred years, he is trans
to fairyland . . ." On the other h
Paul Eldridge, in his *François Rab
the Great Storyteller* (1971), claims
the parents died because of the p
tive, not for want of one, and b
that Gargantua forced all of the
oners he'd taken (as if they
sweets, I suppose) into his hollow t
in lieu of a filling. But I have h
that he also stuffed the cuffs o
sleeves, his game bag, and the t
his hose with his victims. Tales of
should yield such variations; the
there are the merrier they mak
Always consult many authorities;

nfect you with suspicion—a de-
e service.
is anonymous author happily sup-
the details necessary to tall tales,
re are familiar with them in the
of the Paul Bunyan legend or
of the stories that floated with
oatmen down the Mississippi or
that boasted of trappers who,
nanded, fought bear and cougar in
tier forest. How big, how strong,
ungry was the lumberjack, the
nan, the hunter? "Gargantua
ed off two shipfuls of fresh her-
and three casks of salted mack-
. . he dined on three hundred
and two hundred sheep; . . . he
d off the bells of Notre-Dame de
o hang them on his mare's neck;
s peals of laughter were heard
and a half leagues away . . ." Not
bel less, not a yard more.
Rabelais's monsters must outdo
utdoers . . . and they do. Their
s of hyperbole do not exclude
author, who swears in *Pantagru-*
ologue: "may I be carried off by
dred thousand basketfuls of fine
, body and soul, innards and en-
if I lie by so much as a single
in the whole story"—a protes-
n exceeded only by the punish-
s to be inflicted upon readers who
ot obediently believe. Like the
hlet that preceded it, *Pantagru-*
acked with gross-out japes and
cale jokes, with mythological
that mock the social and reli-
figments that one must pretend
ieve out of fear of just those pains
ais promises his own disbeliev-
"sulphur, flames and the bot-
ss pit."
turning everything topsy-turvy,
*gruel* mimics the meanings and
s of medieval carnivals and festi-
oo, a fundamental aspect of Ra-
's human comedy famously de-
d by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais*
*His World* (1968). The school of
n formalists with which Bakhtin
ssociated had made considerable
ces in the study of folktales and
ds, particularly in terms of their
ive forms; so Rabelais's reliance
e life and laughter of common
e made ideal material for the Russ-
itic's cast of mind. *Gargantua* and
*gruel* belonged to the culture of
ar carnival humor, of which there were, Bakhtin felt, three basic manifestations: ritual spectacles, such as carnival pageants, fools' day celebrations, and marketplace entertainments; written as well as oral parodies in both Latin and their local dialects; and various sorts of slanging matches, cursing patterns, catchphrases, and what we call "trash talk" now.

So the giants are giants because they began their lives outside of Rabelais's world as giants. Rabelais acknowledges this in his Prologue to *Pantagruel*. However, they flourish as giants for further reasons, many of them naming and enumerative, and because a giant was a good visual symbol for a group, a class, an order, a faith, an army, a nation. Our author was painfully aware of the rapacity of kings, counts, cardinals and bishops, whose entourages ate like the armies that periodically swept over the countryside, gobbling up everything that couldn't be hidden from them. His imagery anticipates Hobbes's invention of that artificial body, the "corporate giant."

In 1651, when Thomas Hobbes published his great work on our need to relinquish rights to form an absolute sovereignty and escape the chaos of a state of nature, he fronted his text with an engraving that depicted the figure of a king whose body was made of many men—a corporate Leviathan—just as his treatise advised; and to ensure his own safety, during the difficult civil-war times in which he wrote, Hobbes gave the ruler Oliver Cromwell's face, while upon the Lord Protector's head he placed the crown of a Catholic, Charles the Second—a duplicity Rabelais would have understood, since, like so many others in his time, he published under a pseudonym at first (Alcofribas Nasier, a transparent anagram of his own name), and the books he wrote were regularly proscribed.

The little story of the medlars that appears on the first pages of *Pantagruel* furnishes a good context for the understanding of the preternatural swellings that afflict this text and all its occupants. When Cain kills Abel the earth becomes soaked in the blood of the victim and bears in consequence an abundance of fruit. The normally compact leathery crab apples that the medlar tree produces were in


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the subsequent season so large that three of them sufficed for a bushel. The text has scarcely taken a step, yet it has managed to traduce two biblical tales, pun on God's injunction to "be fruitful," and redo Eden's celebrated seduction as a menacing farce—which, come to think of it, it is. The side effects of medlar gorging were not all benevolent, nor should we have expected them to be, if we remember the blood of injustice that stimulated their growth: "All of them suffered from a really horrible swelling on their bodies, but not all of them had it in the same place." Some grew bellies so big they were called Almighties to mock the manner in which the Apostle's Creed refers to God, but they were good people "and from this race sprang St Paunch, and Pancake Day" (which is Brown's translation of its calendar name, "Shrove Tuesday," and true to its spirit). Some became hunchbacks; soon there were those who had phalluses so long they wrapped them around their waists like belts; still others had to bear bollocks the size of the medlars responsible, and so on into a parody of the generational lists of Genesis. This augmentation is best achieved grammatically by dispensing with the general term and replacing it with an organized mob of particulars, or requiring a noun to do the work of an adjective or a verb, as in this passage, which drew Albert Jay Nock's admiration:

> There was then in the abbey [of Seuilly] a claustral monk called Friar John of the Funnels, young, gallant, frisk, lusty, nimble, quick, active, bold, adventurous, resolute, tall, lean, wide-mouthed, long-nosed, a rare mumbler of matins, unbridler of masses and runner-over of vigils; and to conclude summarily in a word, a right monk, if ever there were any, since the monking world monked a monkery.

Whether, as the schoolmen had debated, there were real universals, which had Being apart from that of their particulars, or only specific material things enjoyed existence, Rabelais knew that Man the Mighty was like a giant individual, and since he was a creature principally engaged in eating, excreting, killing, and begetting; one that used its brain to obtain cash and buy comfort, a friend of whomever might be of service, always seeking personal security, pleasant company, and a tapped keg, and forever in need of enemies to justify its own excesses; we might expect it to lay waste much wherever it was, if only by snoring, thus breaking windows, or by poisoning crops before they could be eaten through breaking wind from its last debauch. This special giant, Pantagruel, was already known to all as a provoker of thirst, a harbinger of drought and cracked earth, and in Rabelais's terms he creates desire as well, needs that swell like cheeks about an infected tooth.

But Rabelais is not long content with giants, and soon introduces a Ulysses of his own—Panurge—a cunning riddler, a sly boots, a devious trickster, yet a loyal friend whom Pantagruel meets upon the road in a wretchedly disheveled condition and whom he questions before deciding to offer assistance. In a brilliant bravura passage that could have been stolen from Joyce's *Ulysses*, Panurge replies first in German, then in Gibberish, Italian, Scots, Basque, Lanternlandish, Dutch, Spanish ("I am tired of talking so much"), Danish, Ancient Greek, Utopian, Latin, and finally, of course, in his native tongue, the French of Touraine. Impressed—as who wouldn't be?—Pantagruel orders Panurge to be properly fed, after which the polyglot sleeps till dinnertime the next day, when he comes to table "in a hop, skip, and a jump." Which is American for "eagerly."

I remember a similar kind of academic contest. In Germany a number of writers had passages from their books recited to them in a language they were unlikely to understand (in this case, it was Romanian). We were asked to identify the authors of each passage. Would we even recognize our own? I remember it well because I won. The secret was in the rhetorical rhythms that the translations retained. There is plenty of rhetorical rhythm in Rabelais, and it conveys a zest and energy, a boyish nose-thumbing glee, that is not equaled, to my ear, by any other writer. But it is not always used to make jokes, for there is much here that is serious on its face as well as strongly meant in its heart. Nor does the fun Rabelais has with higher ed-

ucation, the law, or the Chu
mean that he has embraced i
rance, lawlessness, and disbelief;
rather that, then as now, the stu
the greedy, the hypocritical, the
loyal, or the tyrannical serve vi
as badly as they profit vice.
lawyer jokes should not suggest
wish to dispense with legal
vices—just shysters; and neit
should Erasmus's anticlericalism
Rabelais's invectives against pr
lead us to think they are not utt
devout. The fact is (and it is a
one) that the age was a lot free
its permissible range of blasph
and verbal indecencies than we
now, though making the wrong
mies then could lose you more t
a sect's bloc of bigot votes.

*Pantagruel* went through two
tions with a swiftness that l
ried *Gargantua* into existe
a work less dependent upon its pr
cessors, more inclined to realism t
to whimsies about the wearers of
larger sizes or events exceeding
miraculous, and more likely to se
scenes in locales familiar to the r
er instead of lands far away and ne
never. Meanwhile, like a ragman,
belais has been collecting his ma
al much as we might imagine Brue
doing: insults, for instance, childr
games, bum wipes, countries that
being conquered during the cake l
ers' war. This war, like the disag
ments between Tweedledum
Tweedledee, is over a trifling ref
of a bunch of griddlecake bakers t
a portion of their wares to some sh
herds who were passing a few other
idle and sheepish hours in preven
starlings from eating the grapes t
ripening on the farmers' vines.
shepherds offered the going pr
which was apparently less on the
than the bakers expected to col
once they were in town. They fir
a volley of insults in reply: in Rab
twenty-eight of them, and in Co
the same, but from Brown fly
twenty-six, while Le Clercq's twe
seven are more sporadically delive
and Urquhart overwhelms his vic
with forty-two fancy revilements
fall as if a storm of hailstones cam
attractively different shapes and s

This rudeness leads to a quarrel

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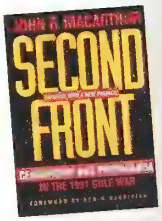
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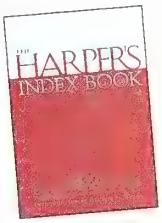


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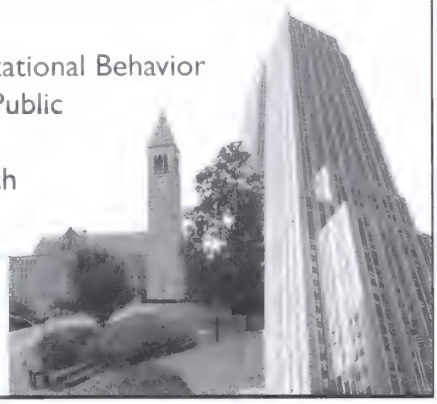
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NOTES FOR "SPLIT PERSONALITIES":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asmon. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

*The EXTRA CLUES fit together to make eight diagram entries.*

ACROSS: 1. pitch-men; 6. [illegible] 9. t(e)a X; 12. [illegible] 13. a-loo-fly; 14. [illegible] 15. c-1-bros(rev.); 17. hidden; 19. so-up; 20. a-GI-O; 21. tut-tis(rev.); 22.(p)air-t.e.-r.; 23. (w)eight; 24. a-nut (rev.); 29. snit (rev.); 30. no(t)-n-CE; 31. As-si-si(rev.); 33. nar(rev.)-rower; 34. Ken Do(ll); 35. nit(rev.)-m(it)y(rev.); 36. *.

DOWN: 2. homonym; 3. homonym; 4. An(rev.)-lad-ro(1)t; 5. *; 6. def-rocking; 7. A.D.-(dul)ler; 8. subs-1-dies; 12. double*; 13. *; 16. h(a-R-ass)er; 18. two mngs.; 25. U.N.-arm; 26. hidden; 27. to-C.S.(rev.); 28. it-em; 32. hidden.

EXTRA CLUES: a. b-e.g.; l. in-n-in-G; BEGINNING; b. heat, hidden; h. hen-ry(e); HEATHENRY; c. (taskmaste)r-ear; n. ranged*; REARRANGED; d. M-ole; e. (arre)Sting; MOLESTING; f. re(f)use; j. Ch-art; CHARTREUSE; g. re(p)ro; i. Ac.-he'd; REPROACHED; k. ce(me)nt; o. p(Ron-O)un; PRONOUNCEMENT; m. ex(p)e(c)t; p. oration*; EXPECTORATION.

starts a fight that results in inj
that must be requited, and so fr
contretemps set steaming by pride
stirred by greed, ignorance, fear
suspicion—a nothing upon whic
soon erected reasons like artiller
sitions—a battle—as always, fo
with lies and lost lives—begins
will prosper as a war; a war that
bearance cannot forestall or ca
war that consumes a list—aforecit
of conquered countries but als
spoils of an invading army; in
that list is the pillagers' verbal e
alent. "They made off with oxen,
bulls, calves, heifers, ewes, sh
nanny-goats and billy-goats; h
capons, chickens, goslings, ganders
geese; pigs, sows and piglets;
knocked down walnuts, harve
vines, carried off vinestocks, and s
down all the fruit from the trees."
the King of the Offended Bakers
"*would teach them to eat cake.*"

But what taskmasters habitu
forget is how to teach others
lessons without having to learn
themselves.

In the course of this contest, Gr
gousier (the king of the country
tacked and the father of Gargan
takes a notable prisoner, called "Sw
buckler" out of respect for E
Flynn. After questioning this pris
in order to learn what his enem
tended by the invasion, and disc
ing that Picrochole (for that was
warlord's name) means to conque
entire country, Grandgousier (den
strating his wisdom as well as his
vance to our times, as I am sure
his intention) releases Swashbuc
with the following observation a
his opponent.

> It would have been better if he had s
> at home, governing it like a king—r
> than insolently invading mine, pill
> it like an enemy. If he had governe
> land he would have extended it, b
> pillaging mine he will be destroyed.
> with you, in the name of God. F
> the good; point out to your king th
> rors of his that you are aware of, and
> er give him advice for the sake of
> own personal profit, for if the com
> wealth is lost, so is the individual
> his property. As for your ransom, I
> it all to you, and desire that your wea
> and your horse be returned to you.

*Continued on page*

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## REVIEWS

*Continued from page 101*

n how things ought to be between n bours and old friends. . . .

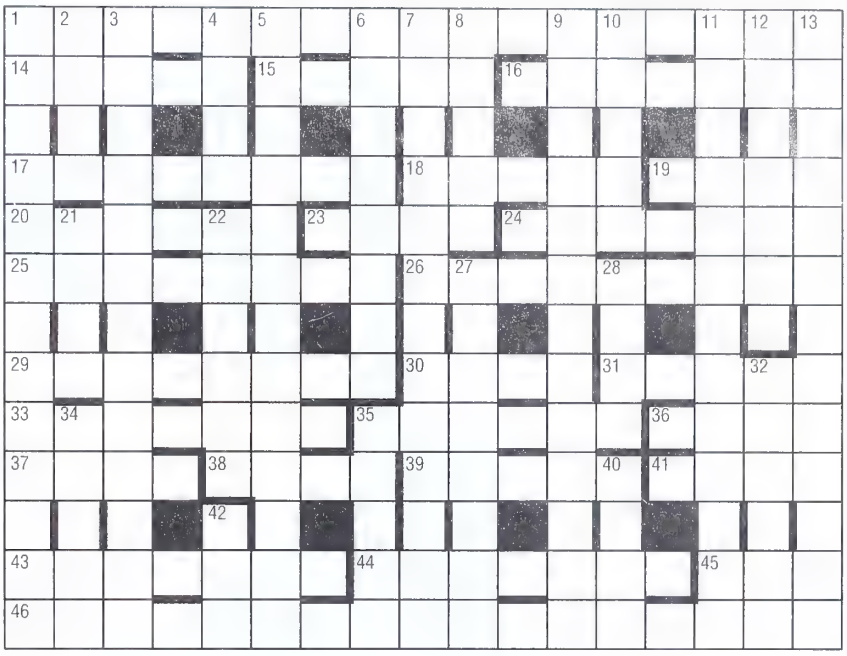
Swashbuckler does not depart w out gifts.

Not did Rabelais's readers, laughed, heartily, most of them, they had gotten the gist and digest moral, yet who obeyed kings and dinals, princes and priests never less, where they believed their inte lay, or where their fears were focu And so confusion and catastrophe tinue, in plenty and in colorful ety, to this day. I notice there are ples in our shops so huge it takes three of them to heap a bushel. ferociously fertile earth is that soi our fruit that malevolent.

### October Index Sources

1,2 U.S. Department of Homeland S rity; 3-5 Coalition Press Center (I dad); 6 Air Force Personnel Center ( dolph AFB, Tex.)/*Harper's* researc Ohio Attorney General (Columbus), ternational Trade Administration (W ington); 9 Congressman Jim Greenw Office (Washington); 10 Federal Ele Commission (Washington); 11 Priso form Advocacy Center (Cincinnati Davenport Police Department (D port, Iowa); 13 Consulate General of (N.Y.C.); 14 Bridgeport Park P (Bridgeport, Conn.); 15 U.S. Depart of Defense; 16 The Brookings Instit (Washington); 17 Coalition Press C (Baghdad); 18 U.S. State De ment; Amnesty International (N.Y.C BBC Monitoring International News August 3, 2004/*Novaya Litkuren* 20 Automated Drivers License Te System (Jackson, Miss.); 21 Environ tal Protection Agency (Washing 22,23 Jan Null, Department of sciences, San Francisco State Unive 24,25 American Geophysical U (Washington); 26,27 U.N. Food and culture Organization (Rome); 28,29 ed States Fund for UNICEF (N.Y.C U.N. Human Development Report ( (N.Y.C.); 31,32 Doctors Without B (N.Y.C.); 33 The Vermont Fish & W Department (Waterbury); 34 *Gui Book of World Records 2004*; 35,36 Stefani, California State University, Beach; 37 The American Society for thetic Plastic Surgery (N.Y.C.); 38 loween Productions, Inc. (St. Louis Telewest Broadband (London).

# PUZZLE



## Bad Luck

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

With 1 Across, (that is, if 46 Across) you probably won't have good luck with this puzzle. The superstitious among you will note that the diagram contains thirteen Down columns, of which seven contain thirteen-letter words.

Clue answers include four proper names. 1 Down is obscure. 16 Across is uncommon and sometimes hyphenated. As always, mental re-punctuation is the key to deciphering the clues. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 100.

ACROSS

1. *(See Instructions)*
14. Washer setting siren off (5)
15. Useless after starting off useful (5)
16. Weary after traveling, now wary after traveling (7)
17. Action on the ice in . . . Alps perhaps? (4,4)
18. Compact about to be defeated (5)
19. Tree shaped into Art Deco star (4)
20. Be against something to sit on after work (6)
23. Crazy sporting equipment (4)
24. Attacks astride maverick (7)
25. Licorice stick elected to be put in wine (8)
26. Firestorm winds favoring change (9)
29. Circle figure in a house or houses with many buzzers (8)
30. Small fit provided between Monday and Friday (4)
31. Annoy the French with part of a tattoo? (5)
33. Furniture that comes with a laugh-track? (7)
35. Rattle girl superficially with salary coverage (6)
36. Stimulate dripping sounds (4)
37. Enthusiasm suppressed by melancholy (4)
38. Make a mess of things, like between goalposts (4)
39. He meets his match halfway in living room (5)
41. Girl turned into . . . (4)
43. . . . runner perhaps—cheer permitted (7)
44. Filled with sound, return to fold? (7)
45. Endless sperm—get it? (3)
46. *(See Instructions)*

DOWN

1. Being aristocrat, he'd debauched bodies with twenty-four faces (13)
2. Brook no mediocre grade starting army routine (4)
3. Working on a tip, a narcotic agent taking people out of commission (13)
4. Islands A, B, C, and D, for example (4)
5. Verified a turn, subsequently acted it out (13)
6. Shoots craps, taking time at commands (8)
7. Gore mixes with cattlemen—it's very attractive (13)
8. Polished up timbers at sea (5)
9. Plant in Love Canal, for one (13)
10. Overexcited movie P.R. man? (5)
11. Siding with audience gets you where you live, possibly (13)
12. Hottest artiste in burlesque (7)
13. Uses numbers sheet (A–Z) in a set written off (13)
21. Some Arabs quietly but soundly fall down (4)
22. Pollster looking up old demeaning address (6)
27. Clip from *The Pig* rap has quote up front (8)
28. Goldberg is Polish and English (4)
32. Latin type lifted profit relating to fast food! (6)
34. Of a look first withdrawn (5)
35. Landing upsets monk—how heartless (5)
40. It helps you catch time after entering Boston University (4)
42. Clay formerly taken from leaderless African nation (3)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Bad Luck," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by October 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the December issue. Winners of the August puzzle, "Foursomes," are Tod Brown, Tucson, Arizona; Gayle M. Downing, Jackson, Wyoming; and Peter McCorquodale, Berkeley, California



# FINDINGS

A physics professor at Vanderbilt University, embarrassed that 96 percent of the matter and energy in the universe is completely unknown, suggested that both dark matter, which was postulated in an attempt to explain why the universe holds together, and dark energy, which was posited to explain why the universe continues to expand, are really two sides of the same unknown force, which he calls kinetic-energy-driven quintessence, or k-essence. Stephen Hawking, the British physicist, claimed to have solved the black hole information paradox. New simulations suggested that the matter and energy jets that spew out of some black holes are caused by their spin. Russian and American scientists concluded that weak gamma-ray bursts are somewhat common, and astronomers speculated that solar systems with small planets like ours may be more unusual than people think. Other astronomers found evidence of smaller planets around a nearby star. Japanese researchers tested two solar sails in space, and geobiologists said that life could exist on Venus. Physicists at the University of Vienna succeeded in teleporting a quantum state from one photon to another, 600 meters across the Danube River; the experiment relied on what Albert Einstein called "spooky action at a distance." A group of scientists claimed that global warming is caused by sunspots, which prevent some cosmic rays from reaching Earth. People born in January and February, a study found, are at greatest risk of getting brain cancer, while those born in July and August are least likely to develop it. A twin delivered two sets of twins on her birthday.

It was reported that HIV has crossed the species barrier from apes to humans at least seven times and that a new strain of HIV, which is undetectable by normal HIV tests, has appeared in Cameroon. Scientists said that eating bush meat is the most likely cause, and earlier this year three bush-meat hunters came down with simian foamy virus. A new report concluded that deaths from brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and motor neuron disease have tripled in the last twenty years; the report's authors argued that chemical pollution was to blame. Korean researchers found that leukemia deaths are 70 percent higher among people who live near AM radio broadcasting towers. Children living next to gas stations, a French study found, are four times more likely to develop the disease. A virulent strain of avian flu was detected in Chinese pigs. A dentist in Texas died after contracting a flesh-eating bacteria called *vibrio vulnificus*. Autism was up in Maryland, and scientists said that alcohol makes your brain work better. Prozac was found in Britain's water supply.

Scientists said that they had found a physical cause for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome; the researchers found evidence that the condition is an immune-system disorder resulting from stress. Other researchers concluded that fatigue is all in the mind. Spanish researchers discovered that a mother's obesity can cause birth defects, and a study found that children who watch two hours of TV a night risk becoming fat smokers with high cholesterol. The British House of Lords voted to limit the right of parents to spank their children, and a study found that women who believe they will live a long time are more likely to give birth to sons; previous research has suggested that malnourished women are more likely to have daughters. Scientists found the reason why mouse mothers are so brave, and it was announced that female blue tits are better mothers when their mates are attractive. The European Court of Human Rights declined to extend full human rights to fetuses, the French parliament banned human cloning, and British researchers were granted a license to clone human stem cells. Researchers concluded that people with high social status live longer and that happy married women have healthier hearts than lonely unhappy women. Scientists found that deceptive primates have the biggest brains. ■

*"Teacher's Lounge," C-prints and Plexiglas, by Sean Healy. Courtesy Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, Oregon.*




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promise of hydrogen is exciting, commercial viability is a long- prospect. At Shell there's gress toward the promise, thanks to a commitment to e the hydrogen economy a reality.

Key to this progress are strategic relationships with leading panies like General Motors and people like Kristin richik, Business Development Advisor with Shell Hydrogen .). Kristin works to capitalize on Shell leadership in fueling nologies and GM's expertise in vehicle technology to determine the best path toward the commercialization.

The centerpiece of this union is the nation's first hydrogen refueling dispenser at a retail site, which supports a fleet of GM hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.

Ultimately, commercialization will depend on individuals choosing hydrogen. And through the efforts of Kristin and others like her, Shell is ready to meet those needs.

Visit www.shell.com/newenergies for details on this and other Shell activities.

Hydrogen" refers to a global business of the Royal Dutch/Shell p and consists of separate companies set up to pursue and op business opportunities related to hydrogen and fuel cells.



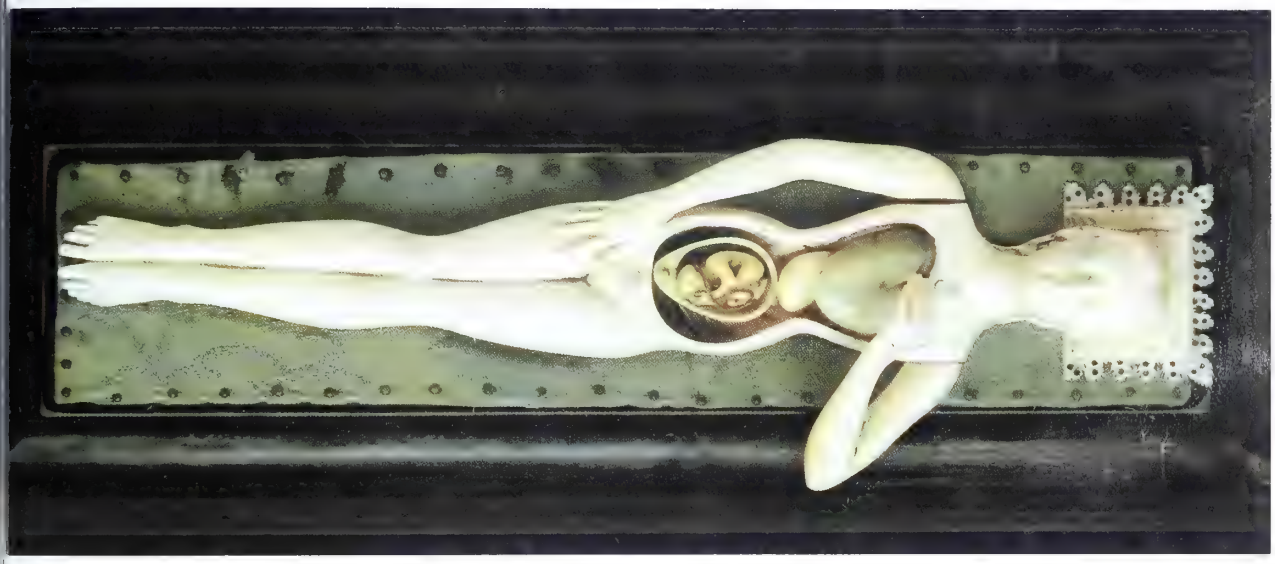

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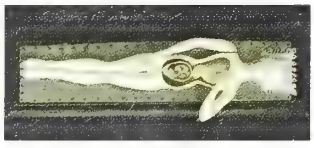
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# LETTERS

## On Message

That the right has used its wealth to dominate the media, as Lewis H. Lapham suggests, only partly explains the rise of an audience for its message ["Tentacles of Rage," Essay, September]. The unpleasant reality progressives must confront is that the far right has developed a message and a level of discipline in its delivery that would make an old-time Bolshevik—not to mention a corporate marketer—proud. The core of this message is straightforward and mutually reinforcing: 1. America is the greatest country on earth. 2. Anyone who works hard can become rich. 3. Faith and family—*not* the public sector—are the bases for individual security. The circumstances in this country may undercut these beliefs, but they are no less viscerally appealing than progressives' belief in equality or social justice. Unlike progressives, who have struggled to find a unifying set of beliefs to build a following, the right has been articulating their views for forty years. And now that it has the means to deliver the message, courtesy of the Bradley, Scaife, and Smith Richardson foundations, it can make a revolution.

*Andrew Goldsmith*
Takoma Park, Md.

Lewis H. Lapham leaves the basic question of why right-wing ideas onate with the general public u swered. Yes, conservative th tanks like the Heritage Founda and the American Enterprise In tute have been successful in art lating sentiments in ways that be exploited at the ballot box, the basic social organization of United States continues to move ward small ownership and self- ployment. When George W. B says that the Republican Party s to create an "ownership socie that's a much more powerful mes than anything coming out of the eral side of the aisle.

*Mike Weisser*
Via email

The only omission that prevei "Tentacles of Rage" from being c plete was a nod to those forces of servatism that have recently veloped many of the world's relig in a wave of fundamentalism head-in-the-sand reaction to com and accelerating societal change is this flight response that has n the work of the Bradleys, Rich sons, and Scaifes all the easier.

*Curt Barnes*
New York City

Although I applaud Lewis Lapham's efforts to document publicize the "Republican propa da mill," I cannot help but no that in the course of the essay's three pages he makes two unfa able allusions to Asians. He aptl cates Samuel Huntington's *The C of Civilizations* as a philosoph foundation of the neoconserva

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oach to foreign policy, but
am himself casually compares
rise of Barry Goldwater to the
ngol hordes at the gates of thir-
th-century Vienna." Such an
ogy, of course, upholds Europe as
representative of "civilization"
e vilifying the Asiatic Mongols as
ourge. If Lapham would truly like
stance himself from Huntington's
dview, perhaps a more appropri-
nalogy would be to the barbarous
saders invading the prosperous
ng cities of the Middle East.

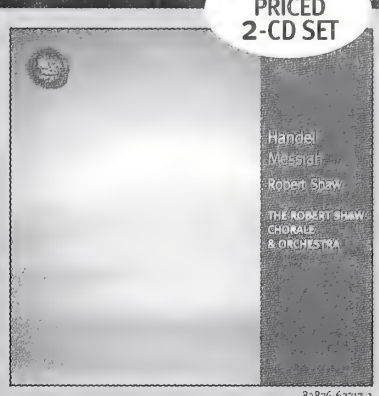
*-Gen Liang*
ceton, N.J.

seems counterintuitive that
purportedly intellectual "left"
ot effectively engage the far-
hing surges of what Lewis H.
am calls the "Republican pro-
nda mill." It is a shame that
nly recourse the current incar-
on of the Democratic Party
s fit to use is one of weak-
ned reproval. When false state-
ts present themselves, as they
e in the so-called Swift Boat
erans for Truth testimonials,
e should be an immediate turn-
over of rocks in order to dis-
e fallacy and investigate credi-
ty. As former President Bill
ton has said, this behavior will
tinue until the method no
er works.
he only way to stop a rolling
e so large and looming as this
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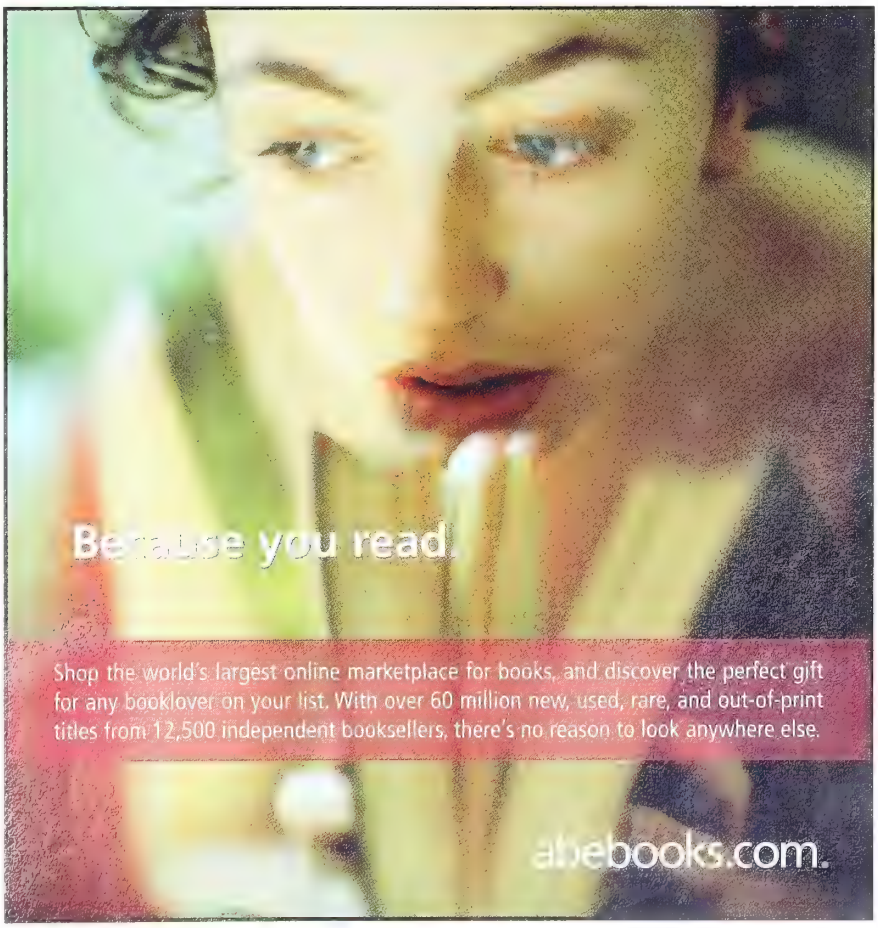
*Aaron Bennett*
erville, Mass.

wonder how Lewis H. Lapham
ld regard a writer for a conserv-
e magazine had he or she re-
ed on speeches given at the
nocratic national convention
before they happened. Would
am readily accept the sort of
logy he himself delivered for
ing about the Republican Na-
al Convention speeches before



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they were given ["Back to the Future," Letters, October]?

*Paul Ubich*
Kenosha, Wis.

## Jailhouse Crock?

Former Correction Officer Lorenzo Steele's depiction of Rikers Island ["Controlling the House," Readings, September] may have gained him fifteen minutes of fame, but your readers only gained another overblown, stereotypical version of jail that is far removed from today's reality.

Violence *does* occur in jails. With an average New York prison population of between 13,000 and 14,000 inmates daily, there are bound to be disturbances. But it is also true that in the New York City correction system, security is tight and violence is at record lows. All incidents of violence are investigated, and perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted. This policy, together with numerous other security initiatives, has led to a 96 percent reduction in violence over the last decade.

In 1995, for example, there were 1,093 incidents of inmate-on-inmate violence involving a stabbing or a slashing. In 2003, there were 40. In light of these statistics, it is obvious that the world of chaos and mayhem portrayed by Steele is more gratuitous, self-serving exaggeration than factual commentary about the day-to-day events inside Rikers Island.

*Martin F. Horn*
Commissioner
Department of Correction
New York City

## How the West Was Won

I applaud Benjamin Moser's criticisms of H. W. Brands's and William C. Davis's ahistorical appeals to "manifest destiny" in their accounts of Texas history ["Appellation Texas Contrôlée," Reviews, August]. Moser missteps, however, when contending that the United States did not pursue a policy of "national imperialism" until the war with Mexico in the late 1840s. The Native Americans who held the North American interior may not have constituted a nation-state, but this does not change the fact that the United States, as a nation, had been seizing land for over half a century to which other people laid claim.

During the War of 1812, American troops fought Native Americans on the western frontiers and gained land with victory. During the 1830s, American troops enforced a national policy of "Indian Removal." To say that the United States did not become an imperial power until the 1840s is to succumb to the ideological trap of Manifest Destiny.

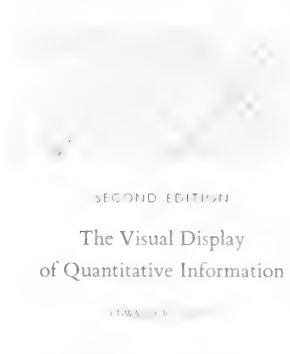
*David Voelker*
Green Bay, Wis.

## Correction

*House of Light III*, by Frank Brunn, was misidentified in the September issue [Readings]. It is a painting, not a photograph. We regret the error.


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# NOTEBOOK

## Straw votes

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*o the extent that a citizen's right to vote debased, he is that much less a citizen.*
—Chief Justice Earl Warren

If I lived in Cleveland or Detroit, y vote in the November presiden- al election might count for some- ing in the eventual result; because live in New York, it will count for othing, as pointless as would be my ote for the next president of Uzbek- an or France. Roughly two thirds the American electorate is simi- rly disenfranchised, and so it comes no surprise that the autumn cam- aign season has brought with it a nse fog of slander in all categories informed and uninformed opinion Democrat and Republican, military d civilian, urban as well as rural d suburban) spewed forth by di- inished citizens in both the red ates and the blue who apparently ke comfort in their feelings of re- ntment, alienation, and rage.

The American people don't choose e American president; the decision sts with the Electoral College, which, was made plain four years ago in orida, may or may not reflect the pular will. The variance is deliber- e, intended by the framers of the onstitution as a defense against the rruption of a federal legislature too sily bought and sold and as a check the ignorant passions of an unlet- red populace widely dispersed in at was still a wilderness. The Elec- ral College in the late eighteenth ntury recruited its members from ong the most enlightened citizens in ch of the states, men "free from any ister bias," as well read as they were ell traveled, admired for their irtue," "discernment," and "infor- ation." By 1828 the theory of ap- pointing wise counselors had given way to the practice of employing partisan stooges, but the Electoral College continues to exclude ordinary, run-of-the-mill Americans from the privilege of direct participation in the naming of the individual to whom they entrust the administration of their government. Which is why, together with everybody else in the country on Election Day, I won't vote for Senator John Kerry or President George W. Bush; I'll vote instead for thirty-one unknown persons pledged to a line on the ballot and chosen for no reason other than their reliably sinister bias.

The Constitution assigns to each state a specific number of electors, the size of the delegation based on population and representation in Congress—fifty-five for California, twenty-one for Illinois, three for Wyoming, etc. Acting as freight-forwarding agents for the plurality of votes cast in each state, the electors come together in fifty state capitols on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December, and there, in the presence of flags and usually at noon, they transfer the entire allotment of their state's electoral vote to the candidate on the winning side of the percentage. They take no notice of, nor grant any standing to, the concerns, wishes, views, theories, or convictions on the losing side of the percentage. On November 7, 2000, nearly 3 million people in Florida voted for Vice President Al Gore, but because Governor George W. Bush received the plurality (by a disputed margin of 537 votes), the Electoral College awarded him every vote cast for Gore and thus one more than the requisite majority of 270 in the Electoral College. Although in voting booths across the whole of the country Gore received 539,893 more popular votes than Bush, the single electoral vote, buttressed by the Supreme Court's decision to forbid a final recount in Florida, placed Bush in the White House.

In a new book published last summer under the title *Why the Electoral College Is Bad for America,* George C. Edwards III, a professor of political science at Texas A&M University, explains the anti-democratic procedure and result in December 2000 with reference to the Bible lesson given at Matthew 13:12: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." The same words describe the method of the Bush Administration in both its foreign and domestic theaters of operation, and in our current state of political animosity and confusion, I've come across few books as timely or as relevant as the one in which Professor Edwards suggests that the country now finds itself confronted not only with an absence of a coherent national politics but also with a constitutional crisis.

Unable to see how a democracy can call itself a democracy unless everybody's vote is counted as equal, Professor Edwards sets out to prove that the Electoral College is both needlessly complex and inherently unjust. He informs his treatise with statistical tabulations (of election returns, presidential travel schedules, placement of campaign advertisements), with historical points of comparison (the elections of 1876, 1888, and 1960 discussed as foreshadowings of the election of 2000),

and with firm refutations of the several contemporary pleadings put forward on behalf of the Electoral College as a necessary support of the two-party system. Other scholars in other rooms undoubtedly will quarrel with one or another of the professor's conclusions, but his principal lines of argument deserve extensive debate in both the news media and the Congress.

*1. Some votes are more equal than others*

Seeking to balance the interests of the larger states with those of the smaller states, delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 devised the "Great Compromise" that apportioned seats in the House of Representatives according to the size of the state's population but assigned to each state, no matter how sparsely settled, two seats in the Senate. The deal was falsely named—not a compromise but a concession to the smaller states threatening to withhold ratification of the Constitution unless they received an equal share of America's newly acquired political inheritance. Writing in *Harper's Magazine* last May, Richard Rosenfeld described the consequences:

> In America today, U.S. senators from the twenty-six smallest states, representing a mere 18 percent of the nation's population, hold a majority in the United States Senate, and, therefore, under the Constitution, regardless of what the President, the House of Representatives, or even an overwhelming majority of the American people wants, nothing becomes law if those senators object.

For the same reasons that dictated the undemocratic organization of the Senate, the Electoral College underrepresents large states and overrepresents small states. As Professor Edwards points out, an electoral vote in Wyoming presently corresponds to 167,081 persons; an electoral vote in California represents 645,172 persons; which means that in a presidential election a popular vote in Cheyenne is the equivalent of four popular votes in Los Angeles or San Luis Obispo. The democratic faith in majority rule sustains and validates every other form of American election, but the election of the president takes place in an alternate universe.

*2. The imaginary majority*

Voters unaligned with the state's electoral vote play no part in the presidential election, and their voices disappear from the national political stage. The majority of the country's African Americans live in the southern states, their presence unremarked upon and their concerns unaddressed by either presidential candidate, because the southern states routinely deliver their electoral vote to the Republicans. Similarly, in the New England states, the electoral vote routinely goes to the Democrats, with the result that both presidential campaigns ignore the presence of conservative, socialist, libertarian, or independently minded voters in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Comparable to the demographic charts governing the sale and distribution of consumer products, the tally in the Electoral College presents a distorted picture of the American character and mind—too much emphasis assigned to the Christian fundamentalism in the South as well as to the secular humanism in the North, not enough recognition of the diversity of opinion in small towns as well as in large cities.

Election by a majority of states rather than by a majority of citizens excuses the candidates from the effort of talking to, much less attempting to convince or persuade, voters not already inclined to applaud most everything they say or promise. Four years ago neither George Bush nor Al Gore spent much time campaigning in Texas, California, or New York, three states that among them encompassed 26 percent of the American population but possessed no electoral votes deemed to be negotiable—the 32 in Texas on consignment to Bush, the 33 in New York and the 54 in California reserved to Gore. The two candidates in 2000 made a combined total of eighteen appearances in Wisconsin, thirty-one in Michigan, and twenty-six in Florida; neither of them appeared, not even once, in any of the eighteen states (among them Vermont, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Connecticut) regarded as dead letters and foregone conclusions.

The disproportionate investment time and money in the so-called swi or battleground states is a measure the degree to which the value of American citizen has been discount and debased. The presidential can dates don't address the America people simply as their fellow countr men; they speak to an aggregate interest groups and target aud ences—Americans distinguished n by the fact of being American but those of their ancillary characteristi that reduce them to a commodity: a female American, a white Ame can, a gay American, a black Ame can, a Jewish American, a Nati American, a swing-state America The subordination of the noun to t adjective makes a mockery of the de ocratic premise, but it serves the m keting strategy of a campaign direct at the Electoral College, and it su stitutes for a unified American or r tional interest an incoherent misc lany of state or special interests. Whi is why the naming of the next pre dent of the United States can turn r on a question important to the cou try as a whole but on a sentiment d to the hearts of the Cuban Americ in the swing state of Florida.

*3. Chicanery*

As of late September the twen one swing states that the president sales directors believed to be "in pl (among them Florida, Tennessee, W consin, Minnesota, Ohio, Virgin and Missouri) accounted for a tota 216 electoral votes (80 percent of t number necessary to win the Wh House). Four years ago in many those states the difference between winning and losing percentage of popular plurality was extremely sm (.22 percent in Wisconsin, .01 p cent in Florida), which, if the politi parties hold true to form in this N vember's election, should greatly prove the odds in favor of theft fraud. Of the 115 million votes lik to be cast on Election Day, 36 mill will be punched into direct record electronic systems (DREs) that p vide no paper receipt and no possi ity of a recount independent of computers under the control of l election officials and the corporati hired to vouch for the result. The s

vision of Elections in Florida already s ruled illegal any attempt to re- unt votes subject to dispute.

By doing away with the Electoral llege we wouldn't cure all the ills it currently afflict the American nocracy—the state of political alysis that follows from the two- ty system, unrepresentative govern- nt in the Senate, etc.—but at the y least we might make a beginning. e reform would strengthen what nes Madison once called "the vital nciple of republican govern- nt"—one man, one vote, the will of majority, the belief that all of us ve an equal say in the matter. We ve ourselves citizens of a democracy by our winning of elections but by agreeing to lose elections. The l is hard to make, and the consent the governed not freely given, un- we think ourselves participant in election. If my vote doesn't count, ave no stake in the outcome, no son to accept responsibility for, or uire knowledge of, either the good evil done in my name by the gov- ment in Washington. A CBS/*New k Times* poll taken in May 2003 ., twenty months after the collapse he World Trade Center and eight ks after the invasion of Iraq) dis- ered 38 percent of the respondents sing to regard George W. Bush as legitimate president of the United tes, a finding that accounts for a d deal of the rancor in this au- n's election campaign.

Since the inception of the republic, entral theme in the American po- cal story has been the one about the her broadening of the electorate thus the further democratization of Constitution. The intention has n abetted and approved by politi- ns as distant from one another in e and place as Presidents James dison and Andrew Jackson, Sena- Estes Kefauver, Hubert Humphrey, Margaret Chase Smith. Five of the enteen amendments added to the of Rights since 1791 have ex- nded the electorate—the Fifteenth 870 (extending the vote to former ves), the Nineteenth in 1920 esenting the vote to women), the enty-third in 1961 (granting the e to residents of Washington, D.C.), Twenty-fourth in 1964 (prohibiting poll taxes), and the Twenty-sixth in 1971 (welcoming voters to the polls at the age of eighteen). For the last fifty years the Gallup Poll has shown a clear majority of the American people in favor of a constitutional amendment dismantling the Electoral College; three years ago the poll reported "little question" on the part of the American public about going to "a direct popular vote for the presidency." In 1969 and again ten years later, the Congress nearly passed the necessary legislation, both attempts endorsed by strong majorities in the House but failing, narrowly, in the Senate.

Professor Edwards observes that for more than 200 years the country has survived the consequences of the variance between the popular and the electoral vote (the accession to the White House of Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, of Benjamin Harrison in 1888), but I don't think that our luck is likely to hold for another three months, let alone another decade or century. In no prior election season can I remember talking to so many people who say, bitterly and seriously, that they intend to leave the country if their candidate fails to win the White House. Having lost faith in both the theory and practice of democratic self-government, they look upon the election in the manner of spectators at a bad play, amused or not amused by the whirl and spin of libel in the news media but believing themselves absent from the long and continuing American struggle (brave, dangerous, always against the odds) to secure a government of laws, not men.

Their indifference doesn't bode well for the country's future prospects, and maybe we should count ourselves fortunate if the November election results in stalemate, suspicion, and dispute. The circumstance would oblige us to rediscover the purpose and meaning of democracy, to realign our political thought, and therefore the Constitution, with circumstances far different from those existing in the late eighteenth century, to elect as president a man or woman representing the whole of our national identity rather than the smiling face of a focus-group Caesar or Napoleon striking heroic military poses in a swing-state shopping mall. ■




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By Masha Gessen



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Anne Applebaum,
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# HARPER'S INDEX

Chance that a Republican president has not won the popular vote : 1 in 6
Chance that a Democratic president has not : 0
Number of New York voters who are also registered in Florida : 46,000
Deadline for completion of the first federally mandated national list of registered voters : 2006
Number of states in which voters can cast ballots in advance by mail or in person without providing a reason : 30
Number of states with such a policy in 1996 : 11
Ratio of hours of live U.S.-convention coverage per U.S. network this year to hours of live coverage on Al Jazeera : 1:2
Number of dead bodies pictured in the *New York Times* during the first week of September : 16.5
Number of countries they represented : 5
Chances that one of them died in Iraq : 2 in 3
Number of U.S. soldiers returned from Iraq in the last year who have been diagnosed with mental-health problems : 5,375
Ratio of suicides worldwide in 2001 to war deaths : 7:2
Ratio of Americans killed by lightning since January 2002 to those killed by terrorism : 3:2
Factor by which the annual number of Sahara dust storms has increased in the last 50 years : 10
Minimum number of customers trampled to death in September at the opening of a Saudi Arabian Ikea : 2
Percentage of Britons over the age of 50 who have hurt themselves attempting to open product packaging : 71
Estimated number of Afghans who died in last year's pistachio harvest : 50
Number of restaurants in Guizhou, China, closed in April for adding opium to their dishes : 215
Number of U.S. McDonald's franchises whose drive-through order taking has been outsourced to another state : 2
Average number of seconds by which orders placed at these franchises are processed more quickly than at others : 30
Price paid on eBay last November for two bottles of turkey-and-gravy soda : $63
Distance in feet traveled by the winning pumpkin at Delaware's Punkin Chunkin Competition last year : 4,434.28
Length in feet of the barrel of "The Second Amendment" pumpkin cannon from which it was shot : 150
Maximum number of rounds a semi-automatic rifle may hold to be considered legal in New Jersey : 15
Maximum number allowed by the recently lifted federal ban on assault rifles : 10
Minimum number of Californians serving a life sentence for cheating on a driving exam : 1
Percentage of judges nominated by George W. Bush since 2000 who have been confirmed by the Senate : 89
Last year in which there was as low a federal judicial vacancy rate as in 2004 : 1984
Percentage by which John Ashcroft cut the number of judge hips on the federal Board of Immigration Appeals in 2002 : 50
Percentage change from 2000 to 2003 in the number of immigration appeals sent to the U.S. 9th Circuit Court : +355
Estimated chance that a classified document is "over-classified," according to a Pentagon official this year : 1 in 2
ars since U.S. law began defining aborted fetuses with "pulsation of the umbilical cord" as legal persons : 2.5 (see page 44)
Rank of antidepressants and anti-ulcer drugs among the best-selling prescription drugs worldwide last year : 3,2
Rank of cholesterol-lowering drugs : 1
Percentage change between 2002 and 2003 in the number of U.S. buttock-augmentation surgeries : +533
Weight in pounds of a "millionaire" seeking "Cinderella" in a *New York* magazine personal ad last summer : 444
Days after the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that Dick Cheney married, securing a draft deferment : 22
Price charged on Amazon.com this year for Lynne Cheney's out-of-print lesbian historical novel, *Sisters* : $1,000
mber of U.S. newspaper editorials and op-eds published this year that included the phrase "pot calling the kettle black" : 16

*Figures cited are the latest available as of September 2004. Sources are listed on page 74.*
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# READINGS

[Essay]

## THE TERRORISM TO COME

*By Walter Laqueur, from the August/September issue of* Policy Review. *Laqueur is the co-chair of the International Research Council at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.*

Terrorism has become, over a number of years, a topic of ceaseless comment and controversy, and it now figures prominently on the national and international agenda. It is one of the most emotionally charged topics of public debate, though quite why this should be the case is not entirely clear, as those taking part in the debate do not sympathize with terrorism.

Confusion prevails, but confusion alone does not explain the emotions. There is always confusion when a new international phenomenon appears on the scene. This was the case, for instance, with Communism, which was thought initially to be aiming at the nationalization of women and the burning of priests.

Thirty years ago, when the terrorism debate got under way, it was widely asserted that terrorism was a left-wing revolutionary movement caused by oppression and exploitation. Hence the conclusion: find a political and social solution, remedy the underlying evil—no oppression, no terrorism. The argument about the left-wing character of terrorism is no longer frequently heard, but the belief in a fatal link between poverty and violence has persisted. Whenever a major terrorist attack occurs, one hears appeals from high and low to provide credits and loans, to deal at long last with the deeper, true causes of terrorism, the roots rather than the outward manifestations. And these roots are believed to be poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

It is not too difficult to debunk the correlation between poverty and terrorism; indeed, the experts have long maintained that poverty does not cause terrorism and prosperity does not cure it. Terrorists are not poor people and do not come from poor societies. In the world's fifty poorest countries, there is little or no terrorism. A recent study of India noted that terrorism there has occurred in the most prosperous (Punjab) and most egalitarian (Kashmir) regions and that, on the other hand, the poorest regions such as North Bihar have been free of terrorism. In Arab countries, the terrorists hail not from the poorest and most neglected districts but from places with concentrations of radical preachers. The backwardness, if any, is intellectual and cultural, not economic and social.

These findings, however, have had little impact on public opinion (or on politicians), and it is not difficult to see why. There is a general feeling that poverty and all its concomitants are bad, and that there is an urgent need to do much more about them. Thus the inclination to cou-

[illegible] terrorism and poverty, and the belief that aid to the less fortunate is [illegible] the long term the best, perhaps the only, effective solution for the terrorism problem.

Reducing poverty in the Third World is a moral as well as a political and economic imperative, but to expect from it a decisive change in the near future as far as terrorism is concerned is unrealistic, to say the least.

The link between terrorism and nationalist, ethnic, religious, and tribal conflict is far more tangible. These are many and need not be enumerated in detail. Solving these conflicts would probably bring about a certain reduction in the incidence of terrorism, but the conflicts are many, and if some of them have been defused in recent years, others have emerged. Nor are the issues clear-cut or the bones of contention easy to define, let alone to solve.

If the issue at stake is a certain territory or the demand for autonomy, a compromise through negotiations might be achieved, but it needs to be recalled that Al Qaeda was founded and September 11 occurred not because of a territorial dispute or the feeling of national oppression but because of a religious commandment—jihad and the establishment of shari'ah. Terrorist attacks in Central Asia and Morocco, in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and partly in Iraq were mostly directed against fellow Muslims, not against infidels. Although appeasement may work in individual cases, terrorist groups with global ambitions cannot be appeased by territorial concessions.

As in the war against poverty, initiatives to solve local conflicts are overdue and should be welcomed, but there should be no illusions with regard to the wider effect of a peaceful solution of one conflict or another. To give one obvious example: peace (or at least the absence of war) between Israel and the Palestinians would be a blessing for those concerned, but the assumption that the resolution of a local conflict (even one of great symbolic importance) would have a dramatic effect in other parts of the world is unfounded. Osama bin Laden did not go to war because of Gaza and Nablus; he did not send his warriors to fight in Palestine. Even the disappearance of the "Zionist entity" would not have a significant impact on his supporters, except perhaps to provide encouragement for further action.

Such a warning against illusions is called for because there is a great deal of wishful thinking and naiveté around this issue: if only there were peace between Israelis and Palestinians, all the other conflicts would be manageable. But the problems are as much in Europe, Asia, and Africa as in the Middle East; there is a great deal of aggression that could (and probably would) easily turn in other directions once one conflict has been defused.

It seems likely, for instance, that in the years to come the struggle against the "near enemy" (the governments of the Arab and some non-Arab Muslim countries) will again feature prominently. There has been for some time a truce among Al Qaeda and related groups, partly for strategic reasons (to concentrate on the fight against America and the West) and partly because attacks against fellow Muslims, even apostates, are bound to be less popular than fighting the infidels. But this truce, as events in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere show, may be coming to an end.

Tackling the supposed sources of terrorism, even for the wrong reasons, will do no harm and may bring some good, but it does not bring us any nearer to an understanding of the real

[Strategy]

## NAKED AGGRESSION

*The following announcement appeared in the Summer issue of* Travel Naturally, *a nudist magazine published in New Jersey.*

As you may already know, it is a sin for a Taliban male to see any woman other than his wife naked, and he must commit suicide if he does (which could explain the rash of suicide bombers around the world).

So, in honor of National Nude Recreation Week, on Saturday, July 10, at 4 P.M. Eastern Time, all American women are asked to walk out of their houses completely naked to help weed out any neighborhood terrorists.

Circling your block for one hour is recommended for this anti-terrorist effort.

All men are to position themselves in lawn chairs in front of their houses to prove they are not Taliban and to demonstrate that they think it's okay to see nude women other than their wives, and to show support for all American women. And since the Taliban also do not approve of alcohol, a cold six-pack at your side is further proof of your anti-Taliban sentiment.

The American government appreciates your efforts to root out terrorists and applauds your participation in this anti-terrorist activity. God bless America. It is your patriotic duty to spread the word.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND YANCEY RICHARDSON GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

*"Bus Stop with Sea Spray, Governors Island, New York," a photograph by Lisa Kereszi. An exhibition of her work will take place this winter at Yancey Richardson Gallery, in New York City.*

sources of terrorism, a field that has become a circus ground for riding hobby-horses and peddling preconceived notions.

At the present time almost all attention is focused on Islamist terrorism, but it is useful to remember that this was not always the case—even as recently as thirty years ago—and that there are a great many conflicts and perceived oppressions that may come to the fore in the years ahead. Indeed, these need not even be major conflicts now that small groups have access to weapons of mass destruction.

Islamist terrorism certainly has not yet run its course, but it is unlikely that the present fanaticism will last forever. Religious-nationalist fervor does not constantly burn with the same intensity. There is a phenomenon known in Egypt as "Salafi burnout," the mellowing of radical young people, the weakening of the original fanatical impetus. Like all other movements in history, messianic groups are subject to routinization, to the circulation of generations, and to changing political circumstances. This could happen as a result of either victories or defeats. One day, it might be possible to appease militant Islamism—though hardly in the current period of burning aggression, when faith in global victory has not yet been broken.

Some leading students of Islam have argued that radical Islamism passed its prime years ago and that its downfall and disappearance are only a question of time, perhaps not much time. It is true that societies that were exposed to the rule of fundamentalist fanatics (such as Iran) or to radical Islamist attacks (such as Algeria) have been immunized to a certain extent. Some fanatics, however, can always be found, and as these lines are written, volunteers for suicide missions are being enlisted in cities across Iran and Algeria. In any case, many countries have not yet undergone such first-hand experience; for them the rule of shari'ah and the restoration of the caliphate are still brilliant dreams. By and large, then, the predictions about the imminent demise

of Islamism have been premature, while no doubt correct in the long run.

In the short term, however, the danger remains acute and may, in fact, grow. Terrorist attacks will not necessarily be directed against the greatest and most dangerous enemy as perceived by the terrorist gurus. Much depends on where terrorists are strong and where they believe the enemy to be weak. That terrorist attacks are likely to continue in the Middle East goes without saying; other danger zones are Central Asia and, above all, Pakistan.

Western Europe has become, over a number of years, a major base for terrorist support groups, a process that has been facilitated by the growth of Muslim communities, the growing tensions with native populations, and the ease with which radicals can organize in certain mosques and cultural organizations. Indoctrination is provided by militants who come to these countries as religious dignitaries. This freedom of action is considerably greater than that enjoyed in the Arab and Muslim world. True, there have been some arrests and closer controls after September 11, but given the legal and political restrictions under which the European security services labor, effective counteraction is still exceedingly difficult.

European governments frequently have been criticized for not having done enough to integrate Muslim newcomers into their societies, but integration was usually not what the newcomers wanted. They wanted to preserve their religious and ethnic identity and their way of life, and they resented intervention by secular authorities. The great majority of first-generation immigrants wanted to live in peace and quiet and to make a living for their families, but they have little control over their offspring.

The radicalization of the second generation of immigrants is a common phenomenon all over the world. This generation has often been only superficially acculturated and feels resentment and hostility more acutely. Feelings of exclusion, sexual repression (a taboo subject in this context), and other factors have led to aggression and ultimately to crime directed against their neighbors and the authorities.

True, the number of extremists is small. Among British Muslims, for instance, only 13 percent have expressed sympathy and support for terrorist attacks, but this still amounts to about 200,000, far more than needed for staging a terrorist campaign. The figure is suspect in any case because not all of those sharing radical views will openly express them to strangers.

But, again, prospects are less hopeless in the long term. The temptations of Western civilization are corrosive; young Muslims cannot be kept in hermetically sealed ghettos. They may be disgusted and repelled by alcohol, loose morals, general decadence, and all the other evils of the society they inhabit, but they are at the same time fascinated and attracted by them. This is bound to affect their activist fervor, and they will be exposed not only to the negative aspects of the world surrounding them but also to its values. Other religions had to face these temptations over the ages and by and large have been fighting a losing battle.

It is often forgotten that only a relatively short period passed from the beginnings of Islam in the Arabian desert to the splendor and luxury

[Diplomacy]

## WORD WAR III

*From an August 24 release by the Korean Central News Agency, the official news agency of the North Korean government.*

U.S. President Bush on August 18 hurled malignant slanders and calumnies at the supreme headquarters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This vituperation let loose by Bush has lashed the Korean people into towering hatred and resentment at him and touched off unprecedentedly bitter anti-U.S. sentiment across the country.

Had Bush even an iota of elementary reason, morality, and ability to judge reality as a human being, he would have not dared defile the political system of his dialogue partner so malignantly.

Bush is, in fact, a thrice-cursed fascist tyrant and man-killer as he revived the fascist war doctrine which had been judged by humankind long ago and is now indiscriminately massacring innocent civilians after igniting the Afghan and Iraqi wars.

It is the greatest tragedy for the U.S. that Bush, a political idiot and human trash, still remains in the presidential office of the world's only "superpower," styling himself "an emperor of the world."

Bush's open brigandish demand that the D.P.R.K. disarm itself simply reveals the true intention of the U.S. In a word, his vituperation discloses his cunning political ploy to mislead the world public opinion and bring down the inviolable political system of the D.P.R.K., come what may.

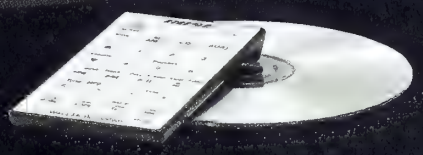
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[Encomium]

# ONE-HIT WONDER

*From lyrics to the song "The Martyrdom of Khava Barayeva," recorded last year by Timur Mutsurayev, one of Chechnya's most popular singers. The song celebrates Barayeva's June 2000 killing of two Russian soldiers. She was one of Chechnya's first female suicide bombers, who have since carried out more than a dozen attacks. Translated from the Russian.*

Death is ringing the bells, I swear.
It is approaching in the form of Chechen
women.
The pickup is rushing toward the commandant's outpost
And loaded with plastic explosives by destiny
A gentle face is visible in its cabin—
The face of Khava, who decided to sacrifice
herself.
Turning into a piece of rage,
She is driving the car straight into the building
And instantly hitting herself
With thoughts of leaving the universe.

Attention! Target! Someone's scream was
heard
From the vile crowd of Russian rats
And a burning hot pickup was met with the
Enemy's machine-guns.
The explosion covered the commandant's post
with death weave,
And smoke covered everything with dozens of
black manes,
And small pieces buzzed like bee stings,
And the enemy took a death shower.
Nothing will save them; not cannons or bravado
And many worthless Russian souls
Like animals crawled into the center of hell.

And here is the Chechen woman, brave Khava
Who became a martyr on the path of Allah.
Yes, the Muslim faith is right.
Dear Chechnya is flooded with blood,
And again it is becoming crimson red
Because sisters are dying in the flames of the
fire.
But these sacrifices will not be in vain—
Paradise is waiting for our village,
Paradise, sparkling with its nice view.
The jihad is proceeding for the safety of the
motherland
And maybe the whole country will become
martyrs.

(and learning and poetry) of Harun al-Rashid's Baghdad—from the austere Koran to the ribald *Arabian Nights*. The pulse of contemporary history is beating much faster, but is it beating fast enough? For it is a race against time. The advent of megaterrorism and the access to weapons of mass destruction are dangerous enough, but coupled with fanaticism they generate scenarios too unpleasant to contemplate.

There can be no final victory in the fight against terrorism, for terrorism is the contemporary manifestation of conflict, and conflict will not disappear from the earth until human nature undergoes a basic change. But it is in our power to make life for terrorists and potential terrorists much more difficult.

It is often argued that terrorism cannot be defeated by weapons alone but requires a struggle for hearts and minds, a confrontation of ideas (or ideologies). If it were only that easy. Each case is different, and many terrorist groups do not have any specific idea or ideology, but instead have a fervent belief, of either a religious or a political nature. They fight for demands, territorial or otherwise, that seem to them self-evident, and they want to defeat their enemies. They are not open to dialogue or rational debate. When Mussolini was asked during the early days of fascism about his program concerning the socialists, he said that his program was to smash their skulls.

The why-do-they-hate-us question is often raised in this context, along with the question of what can be done about it—that is, making use of soft power in combating terrorism. Disturbing figures have been published about the low (and decreasing) popularity of America in foreign parts. Yet it is too often forgotten that international relations is not a popularity contest and that big and powerful countries have always been feared, resented, and envied. This has been the case since the days of the Assyrians and the Roman Empire. Neither the Ottoman nor the Spanish Empire, the Chinese, the Russian, nor the Japanese empires were ever popular. British sports were emulated in the colonies, and French culture impressed the local elites in North Africa and Indochina, but this did not lead to political support, let alone identification with the rulers.

A moderate and intelligent policy on the part of the great power, concessions, and good deeds may mitigate somewhat the perceived threat but cannot remove it, because great powers remain potentially dangerous. They could always change their policies and become nasty, arrogant, and aggressive.

Life could be made more difficult for terrorists by imposing more controls and restrictions wherever useful. But neither the rules of na-

tional or international law are adequate to deal with terrorism. Many terrorists or suspected terrorists have been detained in America and in Europe, but only a handful have been put on trial and convicted, because inadmissible evidence was submitted or the authorities were reluctant to reveal the sources of their information and thus lose those sources. As a result, many who were almost certainly involved in terrorist operations were never arrested, while others were acquitted or simply released from detention.

It could well be that, as far as the recent past is concerned, the danger of terrorism has been overstated. In the two world wars, more people were killed and more material damage was caused in a few hours than through all the terrorist attacks of recent years. The real issue is the coming danger. Megaterrorism has not yet arrived; even 9/11 was a stage between old-fashioned terrorism and the shape of things to come: the use of weapons of mass destruction.

That such weapons will be used is a real possibility. For the first time in human history very small groups have the power to cause immense destruction. Political solutions to deal with their grievances may sometimes be possible but this will frequently not be the case. Today's terrorists, in their majority, are not diplomats eager to negotiate or to find compromises. And even if some would be satisfied with less than total victory and the annihilation of the enemy, there will always be a more radical group eager to continue the struggle.

Perhaps this scenario is too pessimistic; perhaps the weapons of mass destruction, for whatever reason, will never be used. But it would be the first time in human history that a lethal weapon, once invented, went unused. In the last resort, the problem is, of course, the human condition. In 1932, when Einstein attempted to induce Freud to support pacifism, Freud replied that there was no likelihood of suppressing humanity's aggressive tendencies. If there were any reason for hope, it was that people would turn away on rational grounds, realizing that war had become too destructive.

Freud was partly correct: war (at least between great powers) has become far less likely for rational reasons. But his argument does not apply to terrorism motivated not by political or economic interests but based on fanaticism with an admixture of madness. Terrorism, therefore, will continue—not perhaps with the same intensity at all times, and some parts of the globe may be spared altogether. But there can be no victory, only an uphill struggle, at times successful, at other times not.

[Vox Populi]

# IRAQ 182

*From graffiti seen in Baghdad and its environs between March 2003 and August 2004, collected and translated by Amir Nayef al-Sayegh.*

Saddam swallowed all the pricks of the world, and he still said he was victorious.

A thousand curses on your mothers and fathers every day you cut the electricity, Saddam, you atheist without a water pitcher.

Bush the father freed Kuwait. Bush the son freed Iraq, then Syria, then Iran. Bush the grandson will free the whole world!

Saddam and Bush are a split shit: the smaller part fled away, and the larger one got bewildered and confused.

Only three will enter paradise: Bush and Blair and Bremer. [added later] The paradise of your sister's cunt.

"Terrorism" is a drama play, its hero the criminal Saddam Hussein, its director damned Bush, its writer Bin Laden.

Patience, Baghdad, patience. Saddam is coming back soon! [added later] To finish off what remains of the Iraqi people, or to fuck your mother?

Saddam the disgrace! Your end is to be led like a dog by a black female soldier!

Marriage of the same sex became legal in America. Is this, with the mafia and drugs, what you want to bring to Iraq, Americans? Is this the freedom you promised?

Characteristics of the American conqueror:
—Liar like the Baathists, if not more
—Stubborn like a mule, if not more
—Hates clever people and the educated and capable ones, as if he were the very one who taught this to Saddam
—Loves the game of switching the electric power off and on again and practicing this sly childish harmful game on the Iraqis
—In his heart, he hates every Iraqi, Muslim, Christian, Baptist, Arab, Kurd, or even Turkman or Assyrian because the history of these peoples and their civilization is seven thousand years old, not two hundred.

Curse of God on all the peoples of the world, Western and Eastern, Northern and Southern, developed and undeveloped. May only Iraq and Islam live long!



*A chicken farm in Kentucky, photographed by Daniel Pepper as part of a series documenting factory farms in the United States*

Saddam, where is he? Is he eating on the W.C.? His own shit, or that of others?

This Kerry, what is he? Cheese or jam? Bush is made of steel and sharp. Don't disappoint him, Americans!

Hey everyone, Saddam ate beans and emitted stinky air.

Gas *makoo* ["none"], work *makoo*, money *makoo*, water *makoo*, electricity *makoo*: we have exchanged dirt for a smell. Long live America!

Everyone wants to be president of Iraq, even the porters at the Sharjah Bazaar.

Long live Iraq as well as long live Islam, and fall down America, as well as fall down Saddam, for both are feces!

We will cut the head of the snake (Americans) after we complete cutting its tail (Baathists).

No to the faked, fabricated elections that are made in America!

[Semantics]

# MAO-MAOING THE FLAK CATCHERS

*From "Resolutions on Writing in Context," passed last summer by the Maoist International Movement (MIM), a Los Angeles-based consortium of Maoist parties*

Overturning a previous resolution, the term "cracker" can now be used to attack the white enemy when the enemy does something evil in a class/national context (cracker prison guards, cracker KKK, the cracker vote swayed by racist appeals, etc.). If the white in context is lower middle class, we can also refer to "trailer trash" or "white trash" and be understood by the masses.

It is important to consider both the most the-

oretically correct terms and those that the masses commonly use. "Settler" is especially good for land disputes, nation formation, and oppression (I$rael, etc.). "Labor aristocracy" is only slightly understood by the masses. "Amerika" is a good all-purpose theoretical term for the oppressor nation, but "Amerikkka" is necessary when the masses have to know whose side we are on right away.

MIM introduced the world to the term "gender aristocracy," used to refer to enemies with female biology who benefit from the current patriarchal setup. However, 99.9 percent of the world does not know what "gender aristocracy" is. The current and nearly only term the masses have for female-biology enemies is "bitch," but the problem with "bitch" is that it is becoming degraded by wide usage. Terms that refer to male enemies are diverse: pirates, slave-masters, rapists, terrorists, but not so for female enemies. The term "wife-beater" is predominant, but no one says "husband-beater," which shows that people have a difficult time seeing a womyn as the central actor in any story. This does not mean there are no female enemies, and MIM will use "bitch" to refer specifically to female enemies.

Although MIM recognizes that some people reference themselves as "niggers" and call all wimmin "bitches"—which has the effect of changing the meaning of both terms—MIM reserves use of "bitch" as an enemy term and is more friendly to the position that all wimmin are "hos."

With regard to common street language often heard in rap about wimmin as "whores" or "hos," MIM has specifically criticized overuse of the whore concept today as part of our general theory that patriarchy is not only class oppression. On the other hand, talking about all wimmin as whores is something Marx and Engels did in more refined language.

The point is that we have to evaluate the use of terms in context. Given factors such as prison, differential health care that kills off black men before wimmin and white men, and the desperate clamor for men with steady jobs, referring to all wimmin as "hos" is more correct than not. Acting as if a womyn could make a lifestyle choice and not be a ho is completely wrong.

Some hos are friends of the people. If the problem is money, then the term "ho" is better than "bitch." There is normal average-level ho life and then there are those who go beyond that in money questions and those are bitches. Not all wimmin are bitches, but internationally, the system makes all wimmin hos. If it makes a womyn mad to hear it, then she should blame the conditions and organization of society, not the messenger. Under communism there won't be hos anymore.

[Adaptation]

## BUBBA TEA

*Selections from an unauthorized translation of Bill Clinton's memoir,* My Life, *published in China in July. Translated from the Chinese by Alex Beels.*

My uncle Buddy was a little more educated than Papaw, and more knowledgeable. From him I learned about even more wonderful things. Buddy loved to eat ham. Lots of times, he'd buy a ham, bring it home, and call me and my cousins over to eat it together while we chewed the fat. It was from Buddy that I first heard that China was one of the world's most ancient cultures, that in ancient times its technology was already very advanced, and that very early on it had produced the Four Great Inventions. Take, for example, the cannons that were tested in Buddy's munitions factory.

[Reprimand]

## THINK OF JORDAN

*From a memo sent in January to staff of the foreign service of Radio Jordan by the station's assistant director, Ead Batarseh.*

Despite an established and long-standing tradition of conservative morality at the foreign service of Radio Jordan, some starkly sexy songs are still being, sometimes, heard on our radio, to the dismay of many who are jealous for you and for the radio station. Such was the case a few days ago, when a song together with a sensual ambience that built up to it was the cause for the anger of the respected director of Jordan Radio and Television. Without further ado, I hereby call upon you to rise to the level of responsibility, and be the epitome of professionalism and never condescend to cheap excitement, which serves no good goal and is alien to our culture and morality. I think you agree with me that the aim is to be distinguished for good taste and informative entertainment, which must never teeter on the brink of sensuality, nonsensical talk, or unjustified and continued laughing. And I whisper in your ear that the challenge is to make people laugh but without us being involved in the very act of laughing.

Chronically, compass, printing, and paper were also great creations of the Chinese people. Buddy said, "China's ancient inventions far surpassed those of all the other countries of the time, especially before the fifteenth century. There's lots of proof. In those days, China's science and technology left us in the dust."

I used to listen raptly to these stories all the time. I knew that the Four Great Inventions were extremely important. I said excitedly, "Uncle Buddy, [illegible] China!"

Buddy said, "In the East, where the sun rises."

"Quick, take me to China to play!"

"It's too far away."

"How long do we have to wait before we can go to China?"

"After you've grown up . . ."

Ever since I was little, I yearned to go to China. I thought it must be a mysterious and special place. Whenever I saw one of the cannons Buddy tested being fired, saw the force with which the shell came whistling out, I would think how incredible the Chinese invention of gunpowder was.

Hillary's mother could tell that her future son-in-law was a simple and honest man, likable and easy to get along with. She specially poured me a big glass of mineral water, and added some sugar, saying, "Now, can you tell me what you know about the philosophical traditions?"

Encouraged, I said, "Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy, and Western philosophy, which later originated in Greece, can together be called the three great philosophical traditions." As it happens, I have a special love for Chinese philosophy, so I singled it out for a thorough explanation. "Ancient Chinese philosophical thought can be traced back to the Shang Dynasty (sixteenth century B.C. to eleventh century B.C.). The concept of the Eight Trigrams, documented in *The Book of Changes*, contains not only an embryonic form of the dialectical method; it also contains an embryonic form of materialism. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770 B.C.–221 B.C.), Chinese philosophy gradually took form, and produced the Hundred Schools of Thought. Afterward, the Qin Dynasty united China, and during the Han Dynasty, Confucian thought achieved dominance. In the course of the development of China's Buddhist philosophy—the successor of Indian Buddhism—and Taoist philosophy, many topics were explored, including the origin of the world, the difference between ancient and modern, and the relationships between man and heaven, concept and reality, form and spirit, knowledge and action, and movement and quiescence. Chinese philosophical thought has deeply permeated the Chinese people's spirit and tradition of thought, and has had a considerable influence on world civilization."

During my second term as governor, Arkansas made a great effort to attract new, advanced technology. Although I was in the smallest and poorest state in America, I was concerned about the entire world. I paid close attention to China's reforms, and deeply admired Chief Architect Deng Xiaoping's statements about science and technology. Indeed, science and technology are the number-one productive force. They are the power that drives economic and social development.

I said, "Backward and advanced are all relative. China's ancient technology was very advanced, and although they fell behind in modern times, according to reports they will be launching their own satellites very soon." (The first satellite was later successfully launched on April 24, 1970.) "I have a great appreciation for Mao Zedong's saying, 'Do you want to know what a pear tastes like? Then go try it. Eat it yourself.'"

Bush said that this year a record number of women are running for senator. Then he added, "Let's see how they do. I hope a lot of them lose." Right away, many women voters laughed at this incumbent President for failing to study and apply Mao Zedong's thought in everything we do, for Mao Zedong laid great stress on the role of women, saying that "women hold up half the sky." Now that Bush has offended "half the sky," is there any hope of victory for him?

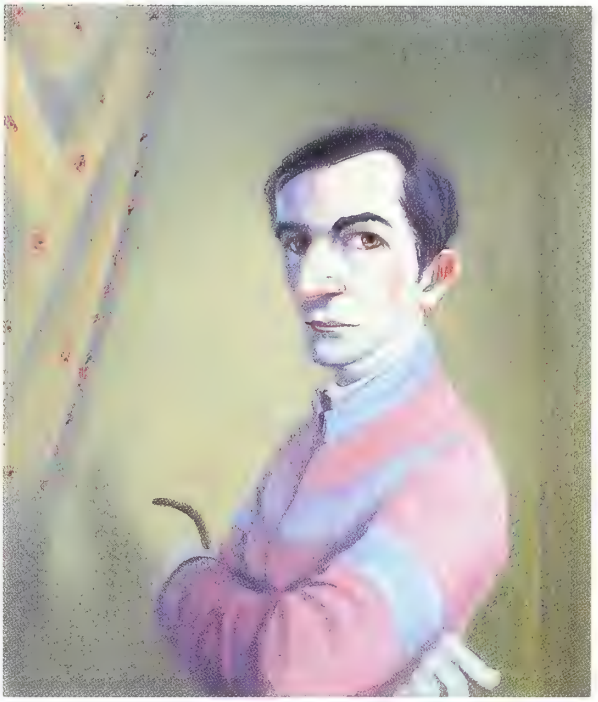
[Standpoint]

# WOT?

*From "The State o Scots: A Staunpynt," by John Law, in issue number 112 of the* Edinburgh Review. *Law is the editor of* Lallans, *a magazine for writing in Scots.*

I thocht aboot no writin this in Scots, dislikin for ti be sel-referential, daelin wi sindrie issues o spellin, register or the like; but ma freins in the Scots language muvement is aa seik readin aboot Scots in Inglis, an forby, a





See You in Shangri-La *and* Uncle Max, *by Moyna Flannigan. An exhibition of her work will take place in April at Sara Meltzer Gallery, in New York City.*

language at canna speak for itsel tells ye it's hauf-thrappelt at the ootset. Scots is faur frae thrappelt yit, but we div staun in danger o killin it oot bi neglect. I ken the reader micht finnd it haurd gaun, as the feck o readers isna weel acquant eneuch wi't ti read it as oor een reads Inglis, gollopsin hail sentences an paragraphs at a quick sklent. We canna coont on ye kennin whit wey things is ettelt ti be sayed, sae the modren vice in Scots spellin is hyperphonetics. Ilka writer haes his or her ain wee hamelt quiddities sae ye can tell us apairt! As wi aa things, uiss maks maister.

Maistery o Scots I canna claim, for in involvement wi it this monie years by I keep lairnin whit mair's ti lairn, an in speakin it I canna haud til it gin fowk roun aboot me speaks Inglis. I get cowpit, an knype: I dout this is a common experience wi bilingualism in sib leids. Nou I'm the wrang side o fifty I think I'm on the wey ti sortin the damage duin ti ma Scots bi years o Anglophone education, an a puckle things I dae ken (lik the existence o the verb *gollopse* as a variant o *gollop*—ti swallae gutsily) I ken weel eneuch bi "native speaker competence" ti be shuir o.

Yet I'm conscious at amang some groups o fowk amang ma ain freins an faimlie, the'r aamaist nae Scots spoken ava at onie time, an that anes seems ti exist in a sel-sustainin bubble o Inglis, sae at it's aesie for thaim ti believe at Scots is deid, ti aa intent. Speirin at fowk, it seems ti be a quaisten whan did Scots dee oot in thair ain faimlie, juist as the same quaisten in monie a faimlie can be asked aboot Gaelic.

Weel, this is the vera condeition o bein fleemit frae yer ain hame, the stuff o alienation. Ye'r like ti wauner aboot talkin ti yersel some days, wunnerin whit wey aathing seems sae fremmit an dounricht orra, the hail kintra queerly oot o kilter, ful o fowk at canna speak richt. Ither days at ye micht wauken on the ither side o the bed, the Inglis ane, an stert awa thinkin in Inglis yersel, Scotland busks in its mair ordnar Anglophone duds, an thare ye ar, aamaist at hame in the bubble yersel. Ma pynt here is at I experience a mental sinderin atween the twa leids I speak weel, an the warld disna seem juist the same dependin whit ane I'm thinkin in.

It's commonly sayed at Scots an Inglis forms a "linguistic continuum," at gin we think on it as a straucht line, haes whit—Scots-Inglis aiblins, at the ae end, an braid Buchan at the tither—sae at a bodie lik masel keeps a hoose baith bits, trevellin up an doun nae dout, but spendin maist time somewhaur near the ends. Contarwise, it's the common souch wi a wheen fowk—aften Scots speakers at that—ti lat on "I aye speak the same wey." Whitiver the truith or itherwise o that in the case o Scots speakers, it dis suggest mono-

lingual experience instead, since it's that language hoose is steidit at a pynt on the line, an thay'll oscillate, babbin roun aboot it.

But o coorse, nae straucht line model can ser, ti gie a stertin pynt for richt analysis whit's happenin. Ye wad want a nummer o ither dimensions: the contexts for speakin, for readin, for writin; the reinge o words, the uiss o Scots graimar, Scots idiom, Scots accent. An ti pit the fingir richt ower on the sair bits, whaur the state o Scots shaws up gey waek fornent, say, Gaelic, lat's speir hou monie speakers o Scots we hae, at writes it accurate tae, wi onie fluency, in onie context thay want, an is aesie able for ti unnerstaun whitiver Scots text (athin raeson) is pitten in front o them?

Whaurbyes wi Gaelic an Inglis aa thae ordnar tests o the guid o schuilin is passed bi monie an monie speakers o thae leids, we micht say at Scots canna yit, or canna nou (dependin gin ye think the leid is ta emergin or deem oot) be wrutten accurate aw—just ti owerstate the case ti dramatise it—sen baith its graimar an spellin is maiters in contention, an its vera uiss strikes fowk as orra. Its prose registers is haurdly uised ava in some contexts, an maist fowk at's guid speakers o a modren variety haes nae schuilin in it, sae at eien the act o readin isna as gleg as it micht be.

The govrenment itsel says the'r aiblins 1.5 million fowk Scots speakers amang us the day. Present policy laes us aa, frae poet ti punter, in a condeition gey like illiteracy. Gin ye canna be richt an ye canna be read, the vera pynt o language, ti communicate, is tint aathegither. That Scots abides as a spoken leid ava is wutness til its thrawn maucht, mairatower, an I coont masel amang optimists. I wad say the average Scot snowks oot fause Scots fair gleg, an that wad airgie at a hie degree o linguistic competence in Scots bydes silent amang us. Whaur can it come frae? Weel, gin this is richt, it maun come sypin quaetly in by the lugs, takkin advantage o the hie degree o mutual unnerstaunin aye possible atween Scots an Inglis.

Til whit degree dis modren Scots hain itsel as an independent leid? It's no possible in onie practicable wey for ti aunswer this quaisten bi gaun oot wi a tape recorder, an I wad airgie it's a wutless, ootlan wey ti aunswer the quaisten. The wey ti aunswer it is faur simpler: ti whit extent is it aye possible the day ti hae a collective discussion wi ithers at unnerstauns whit ye'r talkin aboot, anent whit the Scots wey o sayin a thing is. An whan we come ti that, it is in the vera fact that the'r a braid grund o discoorse possible an a lot o wark ti dae ti dae it weel, nae less nor in a like bit Inglis, that tells us we'r no aa daft.

[Exhortation]

## GO BALLOONS

*From comments made by the producer of this year's Democratic National Convention, Don Mischer, as the convention drew to a close on July 29. Mischer was unaware that his outburst was being broadcast live by CNN, which had microphones in the control room.*

Go balloons, go balloons! Go balloons! I don't see anything happening. Go balloons! Go balloons! Go balloons! Standby confetti. Keep coming, balloons. More balloons. Bring it—balloons, balloons, balloons! We want balloons, tons of them. Bring them down. Let them all come. No confetti. No confetti yet.

No confetti. All right, go balloons, go balloons. We need more balloons. All balloons! All balloons! Keep going! Come on, guys, let's move it. Jesus! We need more balloons. I want all balloons to go, goddammit. Go confetti. Go confetti. More confetti. I want more balloons. What's happening to the balloons? We need more balloons.

We need all of them coming down. Go balloons—balloons? What's happening, balloons? There's not enough coming down! All balloons, what the hell! There's nothing falling! What the fuck are you guys doing up there? We want more balloons coming down, more balloons. More balloons! More balloons!

[Story]

## LIMA, PERU, JULY 28, 1979

*By Daniel Alarcón, from the Summer* Virginia Quarterly Review. *Alarcón's short-story collection,* War by Candlelight, *will be published by HarperCollins next year.*

This story has three characters. Three important ones, that is; three worth mentioning. Others may pop in here and there, but they don't mean anything.

There is the police officer, pointing his gun at me. Manolo Carrión, or so he told me from the

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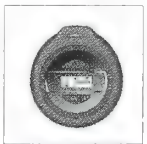


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bared of his gum, he had a small mouth touched with a wisp of a mustache and dark eyes hidden beneath a heavy brow. There is me, Pintor, brandishing a knife I always kept clean, wiping the blade back and forth against my thigh like an obsessive. I was younger then, twenty-five years old, but looked much the same: in a word, ugly. And then there is the dog, with thick black fur and enormous yellow eyes, bleeding red into a Lima gutter. He died, whimpering, but not without a struggle.

It was foggy, Lima asleep in haze.
I'll start with the dog.

There were ten of us, maybe eleven. Names? We shared one: *compañero*. All of us, except me, whom they sometimes called Pintor for my talents with the brush. We formed an uncertain circle around a dead dog, under the dim lights just off the plaza. July 28, 1979. Our first revolutionary act, announcing ourselves to the nation. We strung up dogs from all the street lamps, covered them with terse, angry slogans, *Die Capitalist Dogs* and such; leaving the beasts there for the people to see how fanatical we could be. It is clear now that we didn't scare anyone so much as we disturbed them and convinced them of our peculiar mania, our worship of frivolous violence. Fear would come later. Killing street dogs in the bleak gray hours before sunrise on the morning of Independence Day, July 28. Decent people slept. We made war, fashioned it with our hands, our knives, and our sweat.

Everything was going well until we ran out of black dogs.

Earlier, one of the *compañeros* directed that all the dogs were to be black, and we were in no position to question these things. An aesthetic decision, not a practical one. Lima has an infinite supply of mutts, but not many of them are black. By two o'clock, we were slopping black paint on beige, brown, and white mutts, all squirming away the last of their breath, fur tinged with red.

We had one there: it was dead, split open, its viscera slipping onto the pavement. We were a tired group, trying to decide if this mutt's particular shade of brown was dark enough to pass for black. A year or two before, I would have sketched it, charcoal on newsprint; now I was exhausted. I didn't care what color the dog was.

But this is not the dog I mentioned.

The important one I saw from the corner of my eye, darting down an alleyway, just as we were coming to a consensus that we would paint the dead mutt we had at our feet. But the dog that I saw in the alley was completely black, spectacularly black, and before I knew it, I had dropped my paintbrush and was racing down the cobblestones. My *compañeros* called after me, "Pintor!" but I was gone.

You should know that the vagabond homeless dogs of Lima inhabit a higher plane of ruthlessness. They own the alleys; they are thieves of the colonial city, undressing trash heaps, urinating in cobblestone corners, always with an eye open. They're witnesses to murders, robberies, and shakedowns; they hustle through the streets with a confidence that comes from knowing they don't have to eat every day to live. We ran all over the city that night, butchering them, in awe of their treachery and their survival instinct, raw and golden.

I knew how many cigarettes I smoked each day, and I knew how little I ran except when chasing a soccer ball now and then, and I knew that there was little chance of catching the animal. I knew all this and still I pursued him. I'll admit it angered me to know that a beast might outdo me, and so I resolved that it would not. We ran. It surged ahead. I followed along the narrows of central Lima, beneath her ragged, decaying balconies, past her boarded buildings, her cloistered doorways, her shadows. And I wanted the mutt dead, already dead. War in my hands, death around me, and the hatred for this poor canine consumed and surprised me. I ran with cruelty in my chest; cruelty like a drug pushing me faster, closer, almost even with the animal before it raced away, my leg buckled, and I sputtered to a stop, dizzy, lungs gasping for air.

I was blocks away from the plaza, in the grassy median of a broad, silent avenue lined with anemic palm trees. The poor dog slowed on the far sidewalk and turned to look at me, standing only a few feet away, panting, its head turned quizzically to one side, a look I've seen before, from family, from friends, or even from women unfortunate enough to love me, the look of those who wonder at me, who expect things and are eventually disappointed.

You should know that I felt nothing for the animal other than steely blue-black hatred. I was cold and angry, frustrated by an absurd and gutless evening spent painting and killing for revolution. I envisioned stages of death, degrees of it, a descending staircase, and I wanted with all my heart to see this mutt resting at the bottom. I felt nothing, not as I called it to me, not as I held my hand out, not as I sucked my teeth and coaxed it to me.

And it came, with a pit-pat of paws on the concrete as it crossed the avenue, as if it were coming home, as if it were somewhere else entirely, not in the midst of a war. It was a beautiful beast, yes: walking proudly, shiny black coat, large eyes quaking with energy, overcoming its fear. Stepping toward it, I realized it had been an innocent all along, bizarrely trusting for this place and this moment. I grasped it roughly by the nape of its neck, plunged the knife through its black fur, and twisted.

At the last moment, the mutt struggled might-

ily, growling, lunging, but I held on, and it fell to the ground in a heap, blood gathering in a pool beneath its wound.

Now there is the matter of Officer Carrión.

But let's not get things out of their proper order. 3-2-1. A little about me first wouldn't hurt, though I suppose there are some people who would disagree.

In Arequipa, I chiseled decorations on the saddles my father crafted each year for the parades. I helped him dye the leathers, and then took the hammer and the small wedge and banged and hit and bled until each was beautiful. He taught me the meticulous process as his eyesight abandoned him. By the time I was capable of creating beauty from the taut brown flesh of the leather, he was too blind to see my work. My mother would tell him all about the outcome of my labors. He glowed.

I took school very seriously. I dressed impeccably in my gray-and-white uniform and always did more than what was expected of me. I placed first in my class, and at age seventeen I was accepted to the university in Lima. My head was shaved, my father danced happily, and my mother cried. Lima was known then for swallowing lives, for drawing people from their ancestral homes and enveloping them in concrete and noise.

At the university I studied Philosophy for two years and then transferred to Fine Arts to study painting. I created angry canvases of red and black, with terrorized faces hidden beneath swaths of bold color. I painted in Rimac, just across the dirty river from central Lima, in a small room with a window that looked out at the graceful contour of the colonial city.

I caught the eye of some people with a painting I exhibited at the university: a portrait of a man, eyes averted, his mouth squeezed in a tight grimace, gripping a hammer in his right hand, poised to nail a stake into his left palm. He was gray-and-brown geometry against a red background. My father. And people began asking about me. Who I was. Where I lived. What party I belonged to.

As to the last question, I didn't join any political party until late in my academic career, but when I did, its searing logic entranced me, and suddenly the many unavenged tragedies I had seen made sense. I was one of many. The student body was taken with the idea of change. Dramatic, violent change, perhaps the only kind that can stir souls in a nation like ours. In the cafeteria, students stood on tables to denounce the dictator and his cronies. Slogans appeared on brick walls and were whitewashed by timid workers, only to appear again. Among the students, there was no question of if but only when the struggle would come. It was the same all over the country. Many left school to prepare for the coming war. As did I.

My father's blindness had hurt me tremendously. I longed to show him what I had accomplished. On a visit home, in our small anteroom, I attempted to repaint the canvases that took up so much of my days—with words, slowly, and only for him. He gazed blankly at the walls, considering my words as they chased the images that chased me. My father was a man fit to be drawn: a broad forehead, graying hair, and a doleful grace in his smile. I talked him through years of my paintings but never cracked the austere dark of his blindness. He nodded, told me he understood, but I knew I had failed him.

I returned from Arequipa and made my decision. I left the university only three months before I was to receive my degree. Instead I traveled to the countryside to study explosives with my *compañeros*.

If I were still a painter, I could show you some truths about this country. In 1970, a town disappeared beneath the Andes. An

[Nomenclature]

## HAVE YOU SEEN THESE MEN?

*Nicknames assigned by the FBI to "unknown suspects" currently on the Wanted List for robbery.*

The Leprechaun Bandit
The Impersonator Bandit
The One-Glove Bandit
The Fishing Hat Bandit
The Crown Royal Bank Robber
The Lunchtime Robber
The Doubleheader Bank Bandit
The Bus Man
The Band-Aid Bandit
The Turn and Walk Bandit
The Chubby Cheek Bandit
The Soda Jerk Bandit
The Holiday Robber
The Ground Hog Bandit
The Mad Hatter
The Earpiece Bandit
The Fake-Tan Bandit
The Generic Bandit



Twenty Oaks vs. Emland, *by Michael Wyeth, now on display at John Cleveland's Presents in New York City*

earthquake. Then a landslide. Not a village, but a town. Yungay. You could even call it a small city. It was a Sunday afternoon; my father and I were listening to the World Cup live from Mexico City, Peru playing Argentina to a respectable draw, when the room shook violently. And then the news came filtered slowly; like all things in Peru, from the provinces to Lima, and then back out again to all the far-flung corners of our make-believe nation. We were aware that something unspeakable had occurred but could not yet name it. The earth had spilled upon itself, an angry sea of mud and rock, drowning thousands. In Arequipa, we had scarcely felt the earthquake at all: a vase slipping off a windowsill, a picture hanging askew, a dog barking.

If I were still a painter, I would set up a canvas on that barren spot where that town once stood, select my truest colors, and show you that life can disappear just like that. "And what is this, Pintor?" you might ask, pointing to the brown, ocher, orange, and gray.

Ten thousand graves; can't you see them?

When I was a painter, I would stroll through the city, amazed by the minutiae I found at my feet. Trivial things—a cinder block, resting just so at the edge of an abandoned lot; or the gleaming fender of a car, its dents reflecting and transforming both the city and the sun—nearly drove me mad. Everything hinted at an almost-unasked, undreamed-of question. There were no answers that convinced me. I awoke at two or three in the morning, awash in the metallic, noxious odors of paint and sweat and hunger. At those times, I forgot my body completely, becoming the substance I spread so generously on the canvas.

I have found that sensation a few times since. Once, lost in the tangle of vines in the jungles of northern Peru, running from an ambush. And again, setting a bomb in the bitter

cold of the sierra beneath a concrete bridge. But like a drug, each time the rush is less powerful, and each culminating boom means less and less.

There is a point to all this.

The fog was a stew, rain suspended in air, so I must be forgiven if I don't recall all the details of the officer. There was something drunken about the way he swayed, the unsteady manner in which he held his pistol, arm outstretched and wavering. He had stumbled upon me, perhaps walking home from a drink with friends. It would have been disconcerting even if he had not come upon me as he did, just as the whimpering of the wounded animal tugged at me and, feeling pity, I moved quickly to end its suffering. Just then—"Hey, you there! Stop! Police!" I looked up, blinded. A police flashlight spread its grainy light across the avenue.

What I recall of him: the aforementioned mustache (thin, shadowy) and the gun. I am reminded of its diminutive barrel as well—a fist long at most—and the otherworldly gleam it carried, backlit by his flashlight. A man—imagine this—in this light, just this way, shouting, his gun held as if by a puppeteer, that unsteady, and I looked back toward him and said meekly, drawing on an innocence I did not possess, "Yes?"

"What the hell are you doing?" he shouted. I scoured my mind for explanations but found none. Even the truth was implausible. The silence was punctuated by the dog's pained cry. Finally, I stammered, "This mutt bit my little brother."

He kept the barrel trained on me, skeptical, but stepped closer. "Is he rabid?"

"I'm not sure, Officer."

Bent over the mutt, he examined its dying body. Blood ran in thin streams through the grass, fanning out toward the street. It reminded me of the maps I studied in grade school of the Amazon Basin with its intricate web of crooked streams flowing toward the sea.

"Where is your brother? Has he seen a doctor?"

"Yes, Officer, he has. He is with my mother at home, just beyond the next avenue, a few blocks from here."

He nodded. I could see a glint of kindness in him, though he did not yet believe me. I was not as accustomed to lying as you might think. I was afraid that he would see through me.

Yet a moment later, I was telling the officer all about a brother I never had. I found myself babbling, spewing forth a weightless ramble of words, the officer nodding. I told of my brother, the terrible bite, the awful scream I had heard, the red fleshy face of the wound. His innocence, his shining eyes, his smile, his grace. I gave my brother all the qualities I lacked, made him beautiful and funny, adorable even. I was sweating, my heart racing, recounting the jokes he told, the grades he got. A smart one, my brother! And then I gave him a name: "Manolo, Manolito," I said, and the officer, gun in hand, softened.

"That's my name." I looked up, not quite sure what he meant. "I'm Manolo, too," he said delicately, almost laughing. I chuckled nervously. The dog whimpered again. We faced each other in the stillness of the broad avenue and shared a smile.

The officer placed his gun at his side and moved to shake my hand. I wiped the blade of my knife

[Vocabulary]

## PARTY POOPERS

*From a list of blocked words and phrases discovered by hackers in China's most popular instant-message software. Translated from the Chinese by Christopher G. Rea.*

betray the nation
brainwash
children of high officials
commie dogs
create turmoil
credit crisis
democracy
dictatorship
foreign affairs and the general plan
freedom
hold different political views
human rights
literary inquisition
mass movement
massacre
multi-party
old men's politics
public funds
public opinion is against the system
reading prohibited
real people and real events
real sentiments of the people
real situation
revolution
self-immolation
single-party
student unrest
tyranny
whitewashed peace and tranquillity
will of the people

on my thigh and [illegible]. Here in the hazy light, we shook hands firmly, like men. "Manolo Carrión," he said.

"José Carlos," I replied, cursing myself for letting things get to this point. "José Carlos Barrantes."

"But what exactly are you trying to do, Señor Barrantes? Killing this mutt? What will that accomplish?"

"Rabies, sir. I raised her down to see if she was rabid, and the little bitch struggled with me. I guess I got angry. I guess I got carried away."

Carrión nodded and leaned over the canine. With his nightstick he poked the animal in its belly, eliciting a muted and pathetic yelp. He peered into its eyes for a particular shade of yellow and into its gaping mouth for the telltale frothy saliva. Finding neither, he pronounced, "No rabies, Señor. I think Manolito is going to be fine."

I was relieved. Isn't that ridiculous? Relieved for a brother I didn't have, for a bite that never was, from a dog too trusting to be dangerous. So intently had I been projecting myself into this made-up drama, so completely had I embraced my role—brother, protector, citizen—that my heart swelled. I imagined Manolito and his long healthy days, running, playing among friends, his wound healed with not even a scar. In that moment, I loved Manolito.

I should note now that he was purposefully excluded from the introductions that began this story. I am ashamed of him now. I have spent most of my adult life severing personal ties, steeling my heart for conflict, allowing myself love only in the abstract sense—it is shameful that then, as the struggle was beginning, I was so weak. Manolito is not a character in this story. He is a shadow, a disgraceful and putrid creation.

Carrión, drunk and kind, did not feel such enmity toward him.

"My little brother must be just like your Manolito, always getting into something. He's small, but he likes to fight the big guys. Always coming home with a broken this or a bruised that." Carrión spoke warmly now. "Are you taking him anywhere? The mutt, I mean."

"I'll take care of it, Officer. The doctor wanted to examine the animal. Just to make sure."

Carrión nodded. "Of course. Good luck." He stood up to leave, unfolding himself, clearing grass from his knees. "You should put it out of its misery, you know. No point in being cruel."

It was my turn to nod. I wiped my blade against my thigh, [illegible] thanked the officer, and assured him I would. And we were pulling away, our good-byes restless on our tongues, when suddenly there was a noise, an abbreviated whimper. Looking up, I saw one of my *compañeros*, breathless, not thirty meters away, crouching over a dog (white), holding it up by its muzzle, arm raised, knife in hand, poised to enter the fleshy underside of its neck. He had come down a side street. He had not seen us until it was too late. Now that he saw us he stopped. Confusion. Panic. Fearful, I reverted to form, abandoned my revolutionary training. I wanted to paint it—not the dog, the scene—because it struck me so, the brutal outline of a man at war with a mutt, caught in the act, frozen arms akimbo. I saw what I had looked like. Carrión looked my way, puzzled, then back at my *compañero*, and for a moment the three of us were caught in a triangle of wants, questions, and fears—a record skipping, a still life—a mutually agreed-upon pause during which we each considered in silence the intricate and unfortunate relationships that connected us. An instant, nothing more.

Carrión drew his gun, just as I grasped my knife. My *compañero* let the dog drop unceremoniously to the sidewalk and took off running down the avenue away from the plaza. The white dog scampered off, still whimpering. And Carrión faced me, whatever shadow of friendship we had cultivated now lost in the fog. I held my blade, but weakly and without conviction. I made as if to rise, perhaps even run, but there was nothing there. And while I dawdled with thoughts limp and half-formed, Carrión acted: forgave me, spared me, struck me with the butt of his gun, and ran off in pursuit of my comrade—sealing his own fate.

Reeling, I fell toward what I recognized as death. Into the grass, clutching my jaw, eyes closed, my sight swelled into black. Half-dead dogs howled and whimpered. In the distance, I heard a gunshot.

And then I was awake and alone on the avenue.

I struggled to stand, my knees weak, my head dizzy. The stench was poison. The poor animal had died while I slept. My insides lurched at the sight. It is neither easy nor pleasant, the telling of this. Of all the places war has taken me, I am conscious now that I have been running from the helplessness of that terrible hour.

Of course, I would reconnect with my cell in a day, perhaps two. Tell my *compañeros* about my getaway, my brush with death. Learn of Carrión's dismal end. Curse myself, fight myself, and eventually rebuild myself. All that would come. But for the moment, there was nothing. My fight was over. I listened to the heavy rise and fall of my chest and felt for the first time wholly unprepared to live another day. I covered the beast with my sweater. I walked toward home. It would be morning soon.



*Tammy Mullins, Zelphea Adams, an anonymous woman, and the DeMars Sisters (clockwise from top left), inmates at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women in St. Gabriel, Louisiana, photographed by Deborah Luster. The women in the top row are dressed for Mardi Gras, and those below for Halloween, both of which are celebrated at the prison. From* One Big Self: Prisoners of Louisiana, *a book of Luster's photographs published last winter by Twin Palms.*



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# GAMBLING WITH ABORTION

## Why both sides think they have everything to lose

*By Cynthia Gorney*

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, which is the only federal law ever to include the phrases "gruesome and inhumane" and "removing the baby's brains," was signed last November by George W. Bush and has just been declared unconstitutional by three separate U.S. District Court judges. Its next stop is the U.S. Circuit Courts of Appeal. If John Kerry wins the presidency, defending the ban will be a very low priority of the new attorney general; if Bush is reelected, the ban will be hauled vigorously toward the Supreme Court amid much anticipatory excitement about the possibility of new Bush appointees and the reshaping of American abortion law. In either case, the ban will have accomplished half its mission. This story is about that mission, and about how one abortion doctor and one right-to-life cartoonist helped set off the most sustained and rhetorically high-pitched battle in the forty-year history of this country's abortion wars.



The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban does not prohibit what most people think it prohibits. It is not a late-abortion law. Apart from a single quoted remark in its "findings" section, which is a kind of declaratory preface, the ban contains no mention at all of third-trimester abortion, or of any gestational point in pregnancy. It criminalizes only by method, outlawing some actions during a pregnancy termination but not others, meaning that as practical legislation—isolated from its mission, that is, and considered solely as a directive on what physicians may and may not do in a procedure room—it makes clear ethical sense only to people who don't spend much time thinking about abortion. Defending the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban in court, as teams of Justice Department lawyers were dispatched this spring and summer to do, requires arguing to judges that pulling a fetus from a woman's body in dismembered pieces is legal, medically acceptable, and safe; but that pulling a fetus out intact, so that if the woman wishes the fetus can be wrapped in a blanket and handed to her, is appropriately punishable by a fine, or up to two years' imprisonment, or both.

The term "partial-birth abortion" was invented for purposes of writing legislation. There is no textbook reference to any operative procedure or medical state called "partial birth." There are a few published medical references to "dilation and extraction," or "intact dilation and evacuation,"

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Photographs by Misty Keasler

removal was described in detail in 1992, when an Ohio abortion provider, at a National Abortion Federation meeting, presented a paper entitled "Dilation and Extraction for Second Trimester Abortion," and inadvertently triggered the cross-country chain of events that escalated into what Kate Michelman, the recently retired president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, now says was the most difficult abortion issue she was

## In right-to-life ethical reasoning, a seven-weeks-pregnant abortion is as unacceptable as a thirty-weeks-pregnant abortion

ever called upon to confront. "Silver platter" is another way this sentiment is sometimes expressed, among abortion doctors and abortion-rights advocates, or "gift-wrapped." By this they mean the swiftness, the devastating ease, with which they found themselves ceding their opponents control over the public imagination the month the first Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act was introduced in Congress, nearly a decade ago.

"James was the one who came to tell me," Michelman recalls, meaning James Wagoner, NARAL's executive vice president during the summer of 1995, when two Republican members of Congress sent out a "Dear Colleague" letter soliciting co-sponsors for a bill that would make one particular form of abortion a crime. The letter read, in part:

> During the partial-birth procedure, the abortionist uses forceps to pull a living baby feet first through the birth canal until the baby's body is exposed, leaving only the head just within the uterus. The abortionist then forces surgical scissors into the base of the baby's skull creating an incision through which he inserts a suction tube to evacuate the brain tissue from the baby's skull. The evacuation of this tissue causes the skull to collapse, allowing the baby's head to be pulled from the birth canal.

Vocabulary choices notwithstanding—"partial-birth," "abortionist," "living baby"—this was, technically, a fairly accurate summation of the Ohio doctor's surgical process for removing a fetus intact. A state version of the criminalizing bill had already been drafted in Ohio; in that legislation, the descriptive terminology was "brain suction abortion." The procedure appeared to be unique to the United States, where since January 1973 abortion law and politics have resembled that coffee table game in which players sit opposite a tower of wooden blocks and tug tentatively at individual pieces inside the tower, trying to anticipate the single move that will cause the entire structure to fall down.

"I remember us sitting in my office," Michelman recalls, "and James saying to me, 'Kate, This is a disaster.'"

The federal trials challenging the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban began on March 29, in three separate courtrooms: one in Manhattan, one in Lincoln, Nebraska; and one in San Francisco. If not for the time-zone difference and a brief delay in Lincoln, so that an abortion doctor appearing under a "Dr. Doe" pseudonym could testify from an undisclosed location, the proceedings would have commenced simultaneously, like a split-screen movie sequence—three robed judges ascending to their benches, dozens of attorneys rising to their feet, reporters lined up along the wooden courtroom seats, television trucks parked outside. The defendant in each of the three cases was John Ashcroft, "in his official capacity as Attorney General of the United States," as the legal documents put it. The plaintiffs were abortion providers, in various configurations: four physicians, in the Nebraska case; the National Abortion Federation and seven physicians, in the New York case; and in the San Francisco case, both the Planned Parenthood Federation and the City and County of San Francisco, whose general hospital contains an abortion clinic.

In San Francisco, where the judge had dispensed with opening statements, the first witness was a physician named Maureen Paul. Paul is a small, slender woman with very short blond hair; she is an OB-GYN who teaches abortion practice and was the lead author of a recent medical textbook on abortion. In court she wore a black jacket and pants. Her manner was composed. The Planned Parenthood lawyer, Eve Gartner, was asking her about procedures performed on women whose pregnancy had passed the first trimester. Gartner asked Paul to explain the step-by-typical dilation and evacuation, which is the most common method for second-trimester abortion, and is generally referred to as D&E.

"Can I use the diagram?" Paul asked.

Propped beside the witness stand was a large cross-section of the female reproductive organs.

Paul indicated the cervix, the uterine opening, where, in a D&E patient, several dilators called laminaria would have been inserted the day before and left to swell. "I use a small forceps to remove the laminaria, if they are in place," she said, and then explained how that was done. "I break the bag of water, either by just breaking it and allowing it to drain—the fluid to drain out—or using suction."

Gartner nodded. "And when you begin the acuation, is the fetus ever alive?"
"Yes," Paul said.
"How do you know that?" Gartner asked.
"Because I do many of my procedures, especially sixteen weeks, under ultrasound guidance, so ill see a heartbeat," Paul said.
"Do you pay any attention to that, while you e doing the abortion?" Gartner asked.
"Not particularly," Paul said. "I just notice it metimes."
No one in the courtroom reacted in any dis-rnible way, and Paul's voice remained clear d direct. Gartner asked what she did next. "I acuate the fetus," Paul said. Gartner asked w that was done. "I insert the forceps, and asp the fetus, and pull," Paul said. "And metimes the fetus comes out in pieces, and I ake instrument passes until the entire fetus is acuated, and sometimes the whole fetus will me down into the vagina, at least as far as e head."
Gartner asked whether it was advantageous to mplete the evacuation quickly, and Paul said at it was, because this reduced bleeding and comfort for the woman, and because she ought it safest to insert instruments into the erus the fewest possible number of times. "And u had said that sometimes, when you apply ction to the fetus, it comes out intact up to a int where the calvarium lodges," Gartner said. that correct?"
"Calvarium" is Latin for "skull." "Yes," Paul d.
"In that circumstance, what do you do to com-ete the procedure?" Gartner asked.
"There are two things you can do," Paul said. ou can disarticulate at the neck." She made a y up-and-down gesture with one hand. "Or at I prefer to do is to just reach in with my for-ps, and collapse the skull, and bring the fetus t intact."
"So when you—" Gartner paused to rephrase. n the first scenario, where you disarticulate, uld you consider that to be an intact D&E?"
"No," Paul said.
At the break, everybody got up and went into e hall. Among the murmuring groups outside e courtroom door, a big-shouldered man in a rk jacket could be heard saying quietly to the n beside him, both their faces expressionless: *isarticulate*." In the evening one of the reporters vering the trial telephoned me at home; some-e had suggested he talk to me, he said, because ad written a book about the abortion conflict. had some questions about wording. He said he d not heard second-trimester abortion described detail before. He sounded pretty upset. "I nev-" he said, and stopped.
Never what, I asked.

"I never really thought about this before as anything beyond the right to choose," he said.
"You're why they wrote this bill," I said.

In right-to-life ethical reasoning, a seven-weeks-pregnant abortion is as unacceptable as a thirty-weeks-pregnant abortion. Distinguishing between them, for someone who has fully absorbed the right-to-life view, is like distinguishing between the killing of two-year-olds and the killing of eight-year-olds. "Live human being" is a yes-or-no proposition, according to this way of seeing things; the premise that there exists some in-between form of life (a not-quite human being, a being still under construction) is regarded as misguided, self-serving rationalization.

But it's also acknowledged, in right-to-life circles, that many Americans—possibly most

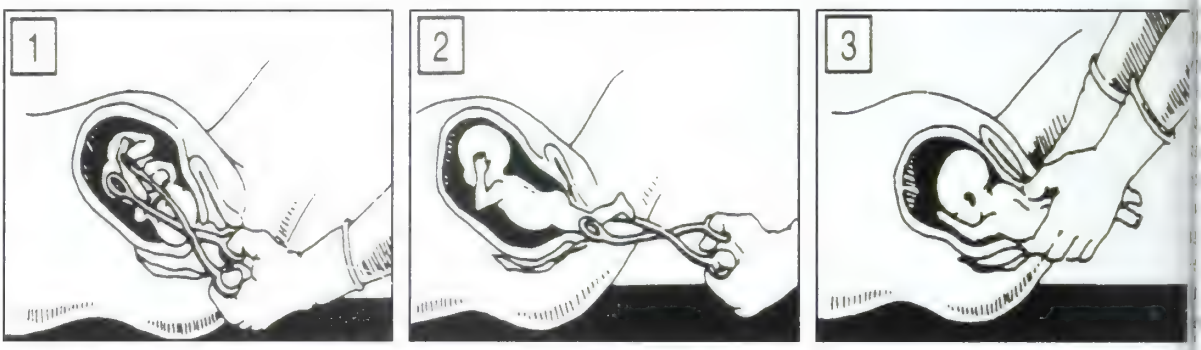


Americans, judging by the deep ambivalence that consistently shows through in abortion polling—seem to cling to that premise anyway. Polled Americans are all over the place on legal abortion, and have been for several generations: they don't want it outlawed; they don't want it unrestricted; they think it's a woman's private decision but they disapprove, often agreeing to some version of the statement "*should not be legal under these circumstances*" when presented with nearly all the reasons women commonly give for seeking abortions. Warring vocabularies

have buffeted most Americans into a defensive crouch when the topic of abortion is raised; half the time they can't remember which side uses "pro-choice" and which uses "pro-life," and what exactly it was that *Roe* v. *Wade* changed, and why they're being obliged to think *again* about the whole conundrum when they thought it had finally been put to rest.

What the ambivalent and unconvinced need, from the perspective of the indefatigable right-to-life tactician, is visuals—literal visuals, to shock people from complacency; and verbal descriptions that force people to keep picturing what actually takes place in an abortion-procedure room. This has been the primary mission of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban. There is long-term legal strategy at work, too, and practical thinking about

There was a brief recap, in Haskell's pape and in an oral presentation before the doctor in Dallas, on conventional methods of late abortion—abortion on pregnancies too ad vanced for simple vacuum aspiration, whic usually means after about thirteen weeks. T terminate pregnancies of up to twenty weeks Haskell reminded his colleagues, surgeons typi cally perform a "classic D&E," in which th doctor dismembers the fetus inside the uterus using forceps, and pulls it out in pieces. Afte twenty weeks, when classic D&E is usually har to accomplish because the fetus's bones are to strong and the tissues are too tough, the stan dard procedure is either induction abortion, i which the woman is put through a drug-induce miscarriage, or in some cases a form of D&E i




ways to discourage abortion doctors from going about their business, but the ban—like its offshoot, the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, introduced late this spring in both the House and the Senate—is fundamentally an image-manipulation campaign. The account of its evolution as the most vivid and effective image-manipulation campaign in the history of the right-to-life effort begins at that 1992 NAF meeting, in Dallas, when a doctor and clinic owner named Martin Haskell decided that other physicians might want to learn about the procedure he was using, "routinely," in Haskell's words, for patients who were twenty to twenty-four weeks pregnant. "The author has coined the term *Dilation and Extraction*," Haskell wrote, in the paper accompanying his presentation, "or *D&X*."

Twenty to twenty-four weeks: note the time frame. Second trimester of pregnancy. Viability, the point at which premature infants are expected to have at least a marginal chance at survival, is now usually set at somewhere between twenty-three and twenty-eight weeks. "It can be used successfully in patients 20–26 weeks in pregnancy," Haskell wrote of his D&X technique. "The author has performed over 700 of these procedures with a low rate of complications."

which a feticide is injected into the uterus ar the dead fetus is then left inside long enough t soften, making it easier to take apart.

Then Haskell explained how a D&X is don

The process takes several days, he wrote, star ing with the sequential insertion of numero dilators to open the patient's cervix. The patie is sent home, or to a motel, overnight. On th third day, using ultrasound for guidance, "th surgeon," as Haskell referred to himself, uses fo ceps and his fingers to pull the whole fetus throu the vagina.

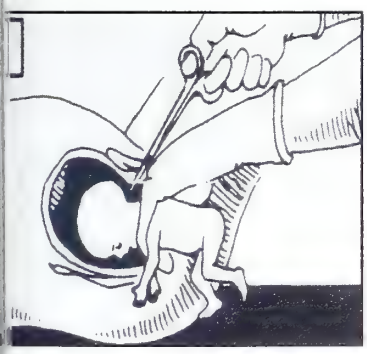
> The skull lodges at the internal cervical os. Usu ly there is not enough dilation for it to pass throug The fetus is oriented dorsum or spine up. . . .
>
> The surgeon takes a pair of blunt curved Me zenbaum scissors in the right hand. He carefully a vances the tip, curved down, along the spine and u der his middle finger until he feels it contact the b of the skull under the tip of his middle finger.
>
> Reassessing proper placement of the closed sc sors tip and safe elevation of the cervix, the su geon then forces the scissors into the base of t skull or into the foramen magnum. Having safe entered the skull, he spreads the scissors to enla the opening.
>
> The surgeon removes the scissors and introduc a suction catheter into this hole and evacuates t skull contents. With the catheter still in place,

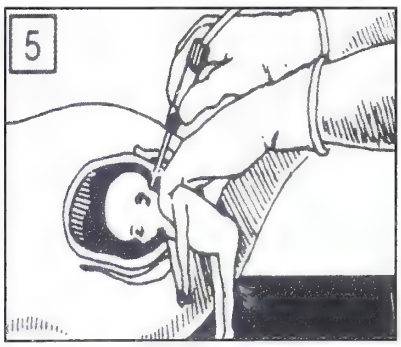


Drawings courtesy National Right to Life Commit

ıpplies traction to the fetus, removing it completely from the patient.

Martin Haskell, who ran clinics in Cincinnati and Dayton, was not the only physician in the early 1990s who had figured out how to use ıtion and forceps to pull out an aborted fetus one piece. At that seminar presentation were ımber of second-trimester specialists who had omplished intact extractions from time to e over the years ("He was telling me nothing v; that technique of puncturing the skull had n done for hydrocephalics for years," one doc- recalls), and among the audience members was os Angeles physician named James McMaı, who had made a specialty of performing intacts and then bringing the fetuses to womwho had asked to see them. "Having it intact a goal, so they could do that, and have this ;ure," recalls McMahon's widow, Gale McMaı, a nurse who helped run McMahon's prac- until he died of complications from a brain ıor in 1995. "I knew what it meant to these ınen, to be able to hold them, and be able to over them and say goodbye. It was profound. ɔt material, and sewed little tiny sheaths, and got tiny hats we could dress them in. I would them on a clean cloth, and I would swathe ım. Many women spent hours in there, and






ved them to their other children. It was always ting the babies with the respect the parents ıld want them to."

McMahon was proud of his technique, which egarded as not only humane but also safer ı dismemberment, since it reduced bleeding kept a physician from having to pull sharp e fragments out of the uterus. He had talked ut it to other physicians, including Haskell. no one had ever written as detailed and clear t of intact extraction medical instructions as kell was now providing, and his paper, reprintnto a volume of the session's proceedings, in right-to-life hands within a matter of ks. The NAF mailing list had long since been infiltrated by abortion opponents, and one of the recipients of the Dallas seminar book was a homemaker and occasional clinic protester named Jenny Westberg, who lived in Oregon, contributed from time to time to a strident little Portland-based magazine called *Life Advocate*, and happened to have some experience at cartooning. (Westberg's first submission to *Life Advocate* had been a "Little Nell tied to the train tracks" political cartoon: clinic protesters rushing to rescue Little Nell, and the police stopping them all, to arrest them for trespass, as the train bore down.) It was Westberg's idea, upon reading Haskell's paper, to write about it for *Life Advocate*, and to illustrate her article with drawings of her own.

## WHAT THE AMBIVALENT AND UNCONVINCED NEED, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE RIGHT-TO-LIFE TACTICIAN, IS VISUALS, LITERAL VISUALS

To understand what happened next—why, of all the medical presentations offered every year by American abortion doctors, Martin Haskell's should be the one to set off six congressional hearings, federal legislation, multiple lawsuits, and more than thirty state bills prohibiting "partial-birth abortion"—it helps to put a kind of magnifying glass to Jenny Westberg's drawings, which were in pen and ink, and simplified, like cartoons. There were five of them. They showed a uterus in cross-section, two gloved adult hands, and an undersized baby ("five months' gestation, for fairness," Westberg recalls) being pulled out by one leg, just up to the shoulders, and then punctured with scissors in the back of the head. The issues of *Life Advocate* containing Westberg's drawings were mailed to subscribers in early 1993, and when more mainstream organizations such as the National Right to Life Committee saw them, the pictures were modified slightly and then reprinted at once into newspaper advertisements and millions of widely distributed brochures. Their extraordinary impact, which continues to this day, bewilders even Westberg. "I had no idea the pictures were going to be made available internationally," she says, "or that they were going to be shown in Congress."

Even before Roe v. Wade, the right-to-life effort was mostly statehouse agitation to keep legislatures from changing their criminal abortion laws, abortion opponents had learned that the surest way to win converts was to stop talking and show pictures. For years, any good right-to-life recruiter knew enough to order a set of the photo collection assembled by Jack and Barbara Willke, the Ohio doctor-and-nurse couple whose paperback "Abortion Handbook" was the talking-points bible of the anti-legalization movement. Most of the photos were closeups of just-aborted fetuses, and to this day, when asked whether there was an epiphany that pulled them into the movement, many right-to-life veterans will recall their first look at the Willke pictures. "The gross pictures," one Texas right-to-life worker in her thirties calls them, remembering having viewed the photos in high school. "The graphic pictures of aborted babies."



As emotional closers for the ambivalent, though—not simply curious people inclined to sit through a right-to-life slide show, in other words—the graphic pictures never worked quite the way they were supposed to. They were sickening, which was the reason they were so powerful; the Willkes once likened them to the Vietnam War photos of the My Lai massacre. But newspapers wouldn't print the abortion pictures, because of the way in which they were sickening; and brandishing the pictures on protest signs, which so mar abortion opponents had supposed would mak the wafflling American majority shut up abou social or personal justifications and just s what it was they were all talking about, prove weirdly counterproductive as well: the medic realities they depicted—the bloody tissue, th ripped off arms and legs, the fetuses corrode by fluids injected to induce abortion by misca riage—made for what right-to-life people can to regard as a collective averting of the eyes.

But there was no gore in Westberg's picture They were gruesome but not gory, whic proved to be a critical distinction. The fa that they were cartoonish line drawings mad them widely reproducible without the averse factor; and more to the point, the Westbe pictures made D&X compelling to look at h the very reason Martin Haskell had wanted tell his colleagues about it: the fetus was intac It looked human. It looked human and helple and small, and the rendering of the scissors an suction catheter made visible, as far as th viewer was able to discern, the instant of th ending of its life. "To think that a human b ing would actually hold a little baby in his her hand, and *then* kill it—that's what got me recalls Keri Folmar, the congressional lawy (her name was then Keri Harrison) who wro the original Partial-Birth Abortion Ban. " you're holding that child in your hand, an knowingly killing the child, you can't argu any more that it's not really a huma being. You just can't do it."

The label "partial-birth abortion," Keri Fo mar says, emerged from a meeting that inclu ed herself; her boss, the Florida Republica congressman Charles Canady; and the lon time National Right to Life Committee lobb ist Douglas Johnson. "We called it the most d scriptive thing we could call it," Folmar recal "We were throwing around terms. We didn want it to be inflammatory. We wanted a nam that rang true."

This was in early 1995, in Washingto D.C., two years into Bill Clinton's presidenc The Westberg pictures had already been put use once—"*Do these drawings shock you? We sorry, but we think you should know the truth*" in a 1993 national publicity campaign again the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), a b that would have amplified the provisions of *R* v. *Wade* into a federal abortion law. After R publicans took over Congress in 1994, FOC vanished. Folmar, who had previously done l gal work for the National Right to Life Com mittee, was now dispatched by Canady to ta advantage of the next tactical opening preser ed by the published descriptions of D&X.

an, abortion advocates never want to talk ut what's *happening* in an abortion," Folmar s. "They generally don't even want to say word 'abortion.' And another goal—this is another point that I wanted to see happen—was to get this bill before the Supreme Court."

A four-point crib sheet on right-to-life rtion legislation in the post-*Roe* United tes:

. Nearly all of it is written with an eye to- d reaching the Supreme Court. Most never s. But if abortion-rights lawyers can be pro- ed into a constitutional challenge, any case ht be appealed, and might wind up before Supreme Court, which might at that point eady, because the right justices have either n replaced or had a change of heart, to re- se *Roe* v. *Wade*.

. Abortion partisans know things about *Roe* t other people generally don't, and one is what ruling said about abortion late in pregnancy. o Supreme Court rulings were handed down ultaneously on January 22, 1973: *Roe* v. *Wade*, ch found the Texas criminal abortion law onstitutional; and *Doe* v. *Bolton*, which over- ed the marginally liberalized abortion law in rgia. Taken together, as they were meant to the rulings declared that states could ban rtion only after viability (there was no spec- ation as to when viability occurs). But even t-viability bans, the Court declared, must per- any abortion a doctor decides is necessary to e the life *or the health* of the mother. In *Doe*, Court clarified what it meant by "health." tors making the "necessary for health" call, Court ruled, were to consider "all factors— sical, emotional, psychological, familial, and woman's age—relevant to the well-being of patient." If the doctor attests that she needs n other words, *Roe* and *Doe* say the state is not posed to interfere, no matter how advanced pregnancy is. This is not right-to-life cant. It's of several aspects of the abortion rulings that t so much further than what either side ex- ted that within a few weeks of January 1973 ens of scattered opposition groups had coa- ed into a passionate, implacable national op- ition movement devoted to either a consti- onal human-life amendment or a complete ersal of *Roe*.

. In 1992, amid many predictions that the ersal was finally about to take place, the reme Court surprised everybody in *Planned enthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania* v. *ey*, the product of a constitutional challenge ecent Pennsylvania abortion legislation. ey upheld *Roe*, which was the surprise. But had laid out its rules for state abortion law according to trimesters of pregnancy;* *Casey* said the trimester framework was "rigid," and dumped it. The new guideline, according to *Casey*, is "undue burden," with a cutoff—a *qualified* cutoff—at fetal viability. From conception right through to viability, *Casey* declared, women have a right to terminate their pregnancies, and no state law may unduly burden, or place "a substantial obstacle in the path of," a woman's choice to abort a nonviable fetus.

4. The late-abortion language about the definition of "health" was left intact in *Casey*. That means Supreme Court doctrine still requires states

"TO THINK THAT A HUMAN BEING WOULD ACTUALLY HOLD A LITTLE BABY IN HIS OR HER HAND, AND *THEN* KILL IT—THAT'S WHAT GOT ME"

to permit any abortion, even if the fetus is developed enough to survive on its own, once the doctor pronounces the abortion necessary to protect the woman's physical or psychological health. Abortion opponents like to sum up this standard as "legal at any time, for any reason, all the way through the ninth month of pregnancy." In practice, there are very few physicians in the United States who perform abortions after the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy—a majority of states still have third-trimester prohibitions on the books, in fact, even though those laws would appear to be unconstitutional under both *Roe* and *Casey*. The data on late abortions doesn't provide much reliable detailed information about why women obtain them, or how they're done. The New York-based Alan Guttmacher Institute, which keeps the best abortion statistics in the country, has estimated about 10,300 per year at twenty-one to twenty-two weeks; 5,000 per year at twenty-three to twenty-four weeks; 850 per year at twenty-five to twenty-six weeks; and from 320 to 600 per year at twenty-six weeks and beyond.** Some of these are fetal-anomaly abortions, requested because a problem has turned up late in pregnancy, but many are not. American law doesn't require spe-

* *According to* Roe, *the state had no assertable interest in a woman's decision to have an abortion during the first trimester of pregnancy. During the second trimester*—Roe *defined that period as from "approximately the end of the first trimester" to the point of fetal viability—the state did have an interest, but solely in protecting the health of the mother. That meant the only* Roe*-approved second-trimester abortion laws would be those directed at the woman's safety; her reasons for deciding on the abortion were still entirely up to her.*

** *This data is twelve years old, but it remains the most comprehensive available.*

cific reasons. From time to time, for rhetorical purposes, the prom-dress girl is invoked—a fictional teenager who has suddenly decided she's not pregnant for her formal and walks into a clinic at twenty-eight weeks demanding to have it taken care of. Nobody has ever produced an actual prom-dress girl; the point about the prom-dress girl is theoretical, and in a theoretical way it is true: under *Roe*, and under *Casey*, in the unlikely event that the prom-dress girl were able to find a suitably cooperative doctor, she too would theoretically be able to claim a legal right to abortion—a constitutionally protected "right to choose."

FOR TWO DECADES THE PEOPLE WHO FRAME LEGAL-ABORTION CAMPAIGNS HAD BEEN WORKING TO KEEP THE DOOR TO THE PROCEDURE ROOM SHUT

It was against this backdrop, with its rich potential for the most dramatic and shocking exercises in national public persuasion, that Keri Folmar set to work.

"As used in this section, the term 'partial birth abortion' means an abortion in which the person performing the abortion partially vaginally delivers a living fetus before killing the fetus and completing the delivery." This was the felony proposed by Canady's bill, and within the coalition of East Coast advocates for legal abortion—lawyers, lobbyists, officials of organizations like NARAL and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America—a case was made, briefly, for walking away from the appalling gamble of a public fight. Ron Fitzsimmons, in 1995 the lobbyist for a clinics' organization called the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, remembers the grand, relentless oratory inspired by the bill: "They'd be talking, talking, talking, and every few minutes, they'd say, 'Mr. Speaker, let me just once again describe this horrific procedure for you.' I swear, I thought the debate occurred every night between five and six P.M., when people were coming home. They did exactly what I would have done—they brought out those pictures. And I was just thinking: who's going to go out there and *defend* this?"

"The reality was, we didn't have a choice," recalls Katherine Kolbert, one of the experienced litigators summoned to urgent Washington, D.C., strategy sessions on how to respond to the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. "There had never, ever been a federal statute that prohibited a particular method of abortion. Even if you could limit the language, they'd just move on to the next. It never ends."

Prohibiting by method had been attempted before, in fact, but never successfully, and the history played a crucial part as lawyers and strategists now argued over the political and public-relations risk inherent in what they were about to do. Twenty-one years earlier, in the surge of outraged legislative efforts that immediately followed *Roe*, the Missouri state legislature had tried banning saline amniocentesis abortion, then the standard method for second-trimester procedures. The Supreme Court overturned the ban, ruling that *because* saline was the standard method, prohibiting it would amount to a state ban on abortion after twelve weeks—and that, the Court said, was a violation of the constitutional right it had just recognized in *Roe*. The ironies here are complex but important: salines, which were uterine infusions of a salt solution that brings on labor and the delivery of a dead fetus, were known even by abortion providers to be a wretched experience for the woman—painful, drawn-out, emotionally wrenching.* At the time, however, salines were far safer and cheaper than the alternative, hysterotomy, essentially abortion by full cesarean operation. It wasn't until the late 1970s that word began spreading of a new second-trimester option that was emotionally grueling for the doctor but safest of all and much easier for the patient: dilation and evacuation.**

By the summer of 1995, as the first House of Representatives Subcommittee on the Constitution Hearing on Partial-Birth Abortion was getting under way, D&E was the preferred method for any American physician who routinely offered mid-trimester abortions—between around fourteen weeks, that is, and twenty weeks, the point at which, as Hask

* *Salines also required hospitalization, because the patient might labor overnight. Most hospitals wouldn't perform salines before sixteen weeks, because the method was problematic with smaller fetuses, and since vacuum aspiration was thought inadvisable after about twelve weeks, that left four weeks during which a pregnant woman seeking a legal abortion, during the salines era, had no option but to remain pregnant and wait.*

** *Before medical instructions for D&E appeared in a textbook, doctors interested in abortion technique would hearing from the handful of physicians around the country who had developed their own methods for dilating the cervix safely and then using forceps to pull out piece by piece a fetus too big to fit through an aspirator. Even among abortion doctors, an operation that required dismemberment was a hard sell at first; some declined to begin offering it, saying they'd refer for D&E if necessary, that they understood its advantages, but that they were unwilling themselves to become skilled at twisting off fetal parts. Early D&E medical literature noted the high emotional price clinic staffs were paying as they introduced the new second-trimester method: "emotionally difficult," "the visual impact of the fetus," "the anguish of the actual performance of the abortion," et*

d observed, the toughness of the fetal parts gins making dismemberment difficult. And re were the real stakes in the pro-choice mble—*not* D&X, a term nobody had ever ard of before 1992, but D&E, which in this untry is used for tens of thousands of abor-ns each year; and by logical extension every her pregnancy-termination method that ght qualify as horrific if an ordinary person re led into the procedure room and made to ok closely at what the doctor was doing.

Was any method safe, if up-close visual acptability were to become the basis for some w legal standard? First-trimester vacuum aspiion would probably pass, since that is mostly recognizable tissue suctioned into a surgical n. But by the second trimester there are nds with fingers and feet with toes, all disct enough to be recognized by the naked eye, d a Horrific Procedure Ban Act, which in ence was what Canady had introduced, could ausibly be adapted to every technique abor-n doctors use from the fourteen-week point . If pushing a suction catheter into the back a fetus's head was criminally "brutal and inman," as Canady's letter soliciting congresnal co-sponsors had put it, then surely lling a fetus's limbs off inside the uterus could entually be deemed equally brutal and inhun. If D&X was a perversion of obstetrical dery, as the right-to-life people liked to say, en surely inducing abortion by miscarriage—liberately giving a woman drugs to make her into labor and expel a dead fetus—was just great a perversion.

But even suggesting this, publicly, meant walkg right into Keri Folmar's trap. For two decades e people who frame legal-abortion campaigns this country had been working assiduously to ep the door to that procedure room shut, redicting the national attention to the action behand and afterward: the *choice* to seek an ortion, the *decision* to have an abortion, the *val-*, inherent in a society that gives women the erty to make this momentous decision with-t interference from the state. They had worried years that if the general public were forced ina mangled-fetus-versus-women's-autonomy deoff, the mangled fetus would win.* And as e Partial-Birth Abortion Ban gained momen-n, organizations like NARAL and the Nanal Abortion Federation made one misstep er another as they tried to fashion arguments at might now serve as an adequate counteright to "the child's brains are sucked out,"

*lack humor, pro-choice version. Q: What are the only r categories for which a majority of Americans agree rtion should remain legal? A: 1. Life of the pregnant nan, or severe threat to her physical health. 2. Rape ncest. 3. Severe fetal deformity. 4. Me.*

which was one of the captions accompanying the Westberg drawings in the *Congressional Record*. There was the argument that D&X is extremely rare, used at most 500 times per year—wrong, as it turned out; the numbers, though impossible to tally precisely, appear to be in the thousands. There was the argument that D&X is used almost exclusively for cases of the most severe and tragic fetal deformities, which typically go undiagnosed until late in pregnancy—wrong, as it turned out; some intact extractions are fetal deformity cases, and some are not. There was the argument that the fetus is always dead by the time the doctor begins extracting, its demise ensured either by the preparatory steps or by the



anesthesia administered to the woman—not only wrong, as it turned out, but a tidy segue into a congressional hearing called "Effects of Anesthesia During a Partial-Birth Abortion," in which one of the witnesses was a nurse who testified that she had watched Haskell put scissors into the head of a twenty-six-week Down syndrome fetus while "the baby's little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his feet were kicking."

Year after year, 1995 through the end of the Clinton presidency, the public battles roiled on: Clinton declared that he'd sign the ban, but only if it included a health exception; the ban's authors refused to write in a health exception, insisting that a partial-birth abortion

is never necessary to protect a woman's health. Clinton vetoed the bill in 1996; a new ban passed in 1997, and Clinton vetoed it again. At one especially dismal point Ron Fitzsimmons made headlines of his own by confessing that he had given reporters D&X numbers that he knew were too low to be real. "Lied through my teeth" were Fitzsimmons's exact words, and although Fitzsimmons says he's still sorry about the credibility damage done to his abortion-rights colleagues in Washington, the truth was that none of them, himself included, had been eager to sit down with reporters or unfriendly congressmen and explain in plain English what D&X is: one terrible-to-look-at procedure among an assortment of terrible-to-look-at procedures used for second- and third-trimester abortion in the United States, which



is relatively uncommon, but only *relatively*—there are 1.3 million abortions performed annually in this country, 12 percent after twelve weeks—and is protected by repeated rulings of the Supreme Court. "We've been talking about 'choice' since 1973, but everyone knows there's this big elephant in the room that we can't talk about," Fitzsimmons says. "I mean, come *on*. It's insulting to women when we obfuscate. Let's *talk* about it."

The San Francisco Partial-Birth Abortion Ban trial lasted three weeks, and each morning's proceedings began the same way: two teams of lawyers walked into a seventeenth-floor courtroom in the federal building, nodded politely at each other, assembled around separate tables, and opened laptop computers. The judge, Phyllis Hamilton, stepped into the courtroom at precisely 9:00 A.M. Everyone rose. Everyone sat. There was no jury, and most days the spectator seating held nine or ten people, including the expert witnesses, all of whom were physicians. Hamilton's voice, measured and careful, never changed. The vocabulary began to take on the familiar, flattened quality that comes with repetition: disarticulate, disarticulating, disarticulation. Calvarium. Fetal demise. Phrases that might have lingered in another context—"crush the calvarium," "use scissors to cut the neck"—floated up from the quiet testimony and were gone. At one point the following exchange took place as Mark Quinlivan, one of the Justice Department attorneys defending the ban, was cross-examining a physician testifying under a Dr. Doe pseudonym:

> Quinlivan: "Doctor, when you are performing a D&E that results in a potentially intact delivery, and you have—and prior to, as you say, separating the body or the thorax from the calvarium—who is holding the body of the fetus?"
>
> Doe: "No one. The vagina kind of tends to be supporting it, and the portions that are out of the vagina kind of just hang down."
>
> Quinlivan: "In those situations, have you ever—prior to separating the calvarium from the thorax, have you ever noticed any movement or twitching or jerking of any form in the fetus?"
>
> Doe: "No. But I guess I wouldn't be particularly paying attention to that. I am focusing on trying to complete the procedure as safely as possible."
>
> Quinlivan: "How about when you take the scissors to cut and separate the fetus's head from the body? Have you ever noticed any movement or jerks or anything of that form on the fetus?"
>
> Doe: "No."

I started using Post-its to flag the pages in my notebooks containing courtroom back-and-forth that seemed especially jarring or convoluted. Soon my legal pads were festooned with stickers, and for a while I thought the disorienting atmosphere in Hamilton's courtroom—it was impossible to walk out each afternoon without feeling dizzy, as though one's directional bearings had gone awry—must be a byproduct both of the testimony itself and of the intricate legal zig-zag each side was undertaking in order to present its case. There's a complicated back story here, but let me see whether I can distill it to its surrealistic essence: the Justice Department, in order to argue that the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban that George W. Bush finally signed is acceptable under the Supreme

ourt's holdings,* needed to prove that there is specific procedure definable as "partial-birth ortion"; that this partial-birth procedure is ever the safest option for a pregnant woman; d that other methods of abortion—dismemrment D&E and induction, in particular—are monstrably available and safe. (The Court s said laws may not "unduly burden" women fore viability, remember, and since everybody rees that D&X is sometimes performed before ability, banning it completely would constite an undue burden unless there's always me equally safe or safer alternative way for a oman to have an abortion.)

The lawyers for abortion providers, on the othhand, needed to prove that "the intact variant," they prefer to call it, is simply one way to do &Es—all the same dilating and evacuating produre, in other words, except that sometimes rts come out and sometimes a whole fetus comes t. If *that's* true, then since D&E is the standard st-thirteen-week abortion method, a ban that tends to all D&E would unduly burden women eking abortions during the second trimester, nen the Court has reiterated that abortion is a gal option and strictly a woman's own decision. rthermore, these lawyers need to prove that this "intact variant" is sometimes the very safest option—safer than having pieces pulled out, and safer than, or at least preferable to, being hospitalized and put through drug-induced labor.

Follow? John Ashcroft's Justice Department making the case *for* the safety of "disarticulation" abortions; Planned Parenthood's lawyers, like their companion teams in Nebraska and New York, making the case that they're *not* always the safest possible option. The dueling courtroom strategies produced long stretches of testimony in which what happens in an abortion—exactly, excruciatingly, what happens in an abortion—was the only thing anybody talked about. And *why*, Doctor, might the ban's criminalization of "an overt act that the person knows will kill the partially delivered living fetus" extend to the disarticulation D&Es you perform? Because sometimes, Counselor, the part I am extracting from the woman's body—not an intact fetus, just the disarticulated part—might still be attached to a beating heart.

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT NEEDED TO PROVE THAT THERE IS A SPECIFIC, DISTINCT PROCEDURE DEFINABLE AS "PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION"

One afternoon in June, I went to Washington, D.C., to visit the National Right to Life Committee's Douglas Johnson, who has worked for thirteen years as the organization's legislative director and is one of the senior right-to-life lobbyists in the Capitol. All three of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban federal trials had concluded; a few days earlier, I had been in Manhattan to watch the closing arguments in the New York case, *National Abortion Federation* v. *Ashcroft*. Hamilton had already issued her ruling overturning the ban, and the Nebraska judge was expected to do likewise, but all spring there'd been urgent legal chatter in both camps about the New York judge, a Clinton appointee named Richard C. Casey, whose agitated questioning of abortion doctors was making him sound like a promising right-to-life ally. ("Does that mean you take care of your patient and the baby be damned; is that the approach you have?" "These women who are having abortions at gestational ages they are legally entitled to—" "I didn't ask you that, Doctor. I asked you if you had any caring or concern for the fetus whose head you were crushing." "No." "Thank you. Next question.")

In closing argument, the judge had lived up to his billing. I had heard him say "tear the fetus limb from limb," referring to D&E; and "they insert a

*This Supreme Court has already overturned one partialth abortion ban—but that was a state law, adopted in Neiska, and its wording was similar, but not identical, to the eral law now being challenged. Between 1995 and 2000, ile the original PBABA was being vetoed by Clinton d re-introduced and generally offered up repeatedly as occasion for congressional oratory, states around the ntry were adopting their own partial-birth bans, most of ich were challenged in court. In June 2000, the Supreme urt ruled on one of these challenges,* Stenberg *v.* Carhart. *a 5-4 ruling, the justices overturned Nebraska's ban, findit unconstitutional partly because it contained no health eption, and testifying doctors had satisfied the lower rt that sometimes they believe D&X is the safest procee available. In addition, the Court found, Nebraska's deition of partial-birth abortion could be read to apply to &Es.*

*Backers of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban of 2003 say vas written with* Stenberg *in mind. The actual ban has changed much from its previous version; there is some ording of the definition of "partial-birth abortion," but no health exception. What the new bill does contain is t of controversial congressional "findings"—assertions t Congress presents as fact, which are meant to take cedence over the trial record, and to which courts are dited to pay "great deference," as the legislation puts it. ong these findings: that partial-birth abortion is "unognized as a valid abortion procedure by the mainstream dical community"; that the procedure itself poses a health to the pregnant woman; and that "the vast majority of ies killed during partial-birth abortions are alive until the l of the procedure."*

*The chances that the current Supreme Court would estially reverse* Stenberg *as a response to these changes he 2003 law seem minimal. But the appeals that would ursued under a second Bush administration would take ny months, potentially enough time for the case to reach configured Court.*

[illegible] by and then suck his brain out," referring to D&X; and there was a long, combative exchange during which the NAF attorney tried to plow through his closing statement while Casey kept prodding him to describe all these second-trimester methods one *more* time, just for the record, and what again was the vocabulary the doctor witnesses had testified they used when they explained these methods to patients? "They didn't tell the woman in simple, unsugarcoated, if there were such a word, language," Casey had said, "that what you're doing is tearing the arms and legs off the baby."

"IT IS ALL COME DOWN TO WHAT WE'VE SAID ALL ALONG— THAT IT'S GOING TO DEPEND ON WHO'S APPOINTING THE JUSTICES IN THE YEARS TO COME"

The Manhattan courtroom had been crowded to capacity, a long overflow line waiting outside the door, which gave Casey a respectably sized audience for these remarks. A productive piece of work, all in all, for an enterprise intended to disturb. Douglas Johnson hadn't been there, but I assumed he had read the transcript by the time he picked me up at the Metro station near his house in suburban Maryland. In his family room, he had laid out various props and documents for me; on the couch, atop a poster-sized Partial-Birth Abortion Ban display, were a seven-inch plastic fetal model and a pair of Metzenbaum scissors. Framed photographs of Johnson's family crowded the mantelpiece—three adopted children, he said, when I asked about the smiling multiracial lineup in the pictures, and a fourth biological child, who was born prematurely and has mild cerebral palsy. "Twenty-seventh week," Johnson said quietly. "One pound, twelve ounces." I knew he had mentioned this son once while testifying about the ban in Congress—"Mr. Chairman," Johnson had testified, "we need to remember that 'birth' and 'full-term' are two very different things"—and now when I asked him about the legislative terminology "partial-birth," he looked deeply irritated. "This method is, literally, a partial live birth," he said. "When Charles Canady said 'three inches from homicide,' that wasn't polemic. It was legally true."

The reason the ban makes no reference to viability or fetal development, Johnson said, is that for legal purposes those don't matter. The fetus's *location* is what matters, he said: if it's all the way out of the woman's body and it's alive, it's been born, no matter how developed it is, and regardless of the woman's intentions when the procedure began.' "Let's say you have a baby born at twenty-two and three-quarters weeks," Johnson said. "You have two neonatologists standing over the incubator, arguing about whether they should do this or that, whether it's futile, whether this baby has a chance. Suddenly somebody rushes in from the corridor and strikes the baby on the head with a hammer. Does anybody dispute that a homicide just occurred? No. One neonatologist may say a certain intervention is futile here. Another may say, 'No, we should do this or that thing.' But they're both going to grab that guy and call the cops."

The reelection of George W. Bush would be no guarantee of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban's future. If Bush serves a second term; and if during that term he is able to realign the Supreme Court, which is now either 6-3 or 5-4 in support of the constitutional right to abortion, depending on how the signals are read; and *if* that suitably realigned Court then agrees to a review—that's the requisite trio of ifs—then it is possible that one of these cases, Second and Third Trimester Abortion Doctors v. Ashcroft, could have a massive impact on American abortion law. In the face of such a transparent game plan, I knew that what I wanted to ask Johnson had a slightly crackpot quality to it, but I was curious anyway: for the dedicated right-to-life person, isn't it ethically repugnant to press the case that one method of ending fetal life is worse than another? Isn't this like arguing about whether murder by gunshot is societally preferable to murder by strangulation?

"I guess we dispute the premise that these things are inevitable—that if you address one form of brutality against the human family, people are just going to go to another one," Johnson said. "I don't think the killing, the taking of an innocent human life, becomes ethically less problematic if it's done one way or another. But on the other hand, it's preferable that there should be less suffering, rather than more. Just like, I suppose if someone said to an opponent of capital punishment, 'We're going to kill this person one way

*Two years ago, George W. Bush signed into law a sha[rp] piece of legislation called the Born-Alive Infants Protectio[n] Act. That law, now part of the U.S. Code, defines as a l[e]gal person "every infant member of the species homo sap[iens] who is born alive," and goes on to define "born alive" as the "complete expulsion or extraction from his or h[er] mother of that member, at any stage of developmen[t] who after such expulsion or extraction breathes or has a beating heart, pulsation of the umbilical cord, or defin[ite] movement of voluntary muscles, regardless of whether t[he] umbilical cord has been cut, and regardless of whether t[he] expulsion or extraction occurs as a result of natural or i[n]duced labor, cesarean section, or induced abortion." [Em[phasis] phasis added.] Passage of the legislation followed deb[ate] about how and whether it might be applied to abortion or neonatologists' decision-making; to date, as far as Johns[on] and several nationally prominent right-to-life attorneys a[re] aware, it has not been legally tested in either situation.*

another. Do you want us to put him up on
eat hooks or give him a lethal injection?' They'd
y, 'Well, I'd rather not have to decide. But give
n a lethal injection. I'm against it either way.'
ell, we're against it either way."

A copy of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban lay a footstool between us, and I asked Johnson nether he would clarify something. Let's posit at the ban has been upheld, I said, and is now effect. An abortion doctor has begun a D&E a patient in her eighteenth week. He's using ceps. He clamps what turns out to be a fetal ot. He pulls, intending to take off the leg, but e whole fetus begins descending into the vagi- l canal. "'Deliberately and intentionally vagi- lly delivers a living fetus,'" I read aloud from e bill. "'Performs the overt act, other than mpletion of delivery, that kills the partially de- ered living fetus.'"

What I was wondering, I said: "Does the doc- now say to himself, 'Uh-oh, I'd better make sure pull this leg off inside the canal, and then wait til the ultrasound shows the heart has stopped, else I'll be violating federal law'"?

Johnson considered. "But what he was trying do at the beginning was a classical D&E, right?"

Right, I said. However, as the actual doctors tes- ed repeatedly during the trials, these things n't always go exactly as anticipated.

"But that's what he was *trying* to do to begin th, so that's what the intent was," Johnson d. "The burden in any criminal law is to show ery element, beyond a reasonable doubt. The ntial threshold is the prosecutor's, and there's a . He has to prove the fetus was alive at the be- nning of the procedure, not just probably, but yond a reasonable doubt. He has to prove be- nd a reasonable doubt that the doctor deliber- ly and intentionally delivered it past the navel. aybe the nurse thinks he did. Did she look? ey'd have to prove every one of those things."

But knowing he might face this sort of crimi- l inquiry, I said, would make our hypothetical ctor unlikely to undertake any procedure at all.

Johnson smiled. Then he chuckled. He ead his hands, palms up. "He's a licensed ofessional," Johnson said. "I'm sure he'll make ery effort to comply with the law."

On August 26, Richard Casey overturned e Partial-Birth Abortion Ban. His ruling de- ibed D&X as "gruesome, brutal, barbaric, d uncivilized," which was the quote that ap- ared in the news stories, but that was only e line in a ninety-two-page decision con- uding that because some doctors believe &X is the safest procedure in certain situa- ns, and because the Supreme Court has said e preservation of the woman's "life or health" es precedence over everything else, the law nconstitutional without a health exception.

Two weeks later, U.S. District Court judge Richard Kopf weighed in from Nebraska. Zero for three, as far as abortion opponents were concerned, and when I called Johnson, he sounded grim. "Judge Casey was boxed in," he said. "I suppose there was some small hope. But at the end of the day, he's a District Court judge, and he looks at the Supreme Court's doctrine. It just comes down to what we've said all along—that it's going to depend on who's appointing the justices in the years just ahead."

A tone of queasy resignation permeates parts of Casey's ruling, as though the judge were still reeling from descriptions of things that appear to be constitutionally protected despite being gruesome and brutal and so forth, and as I read the decision it struck me that abortion opponents, too, took on a certain kind of potentially costly gamble when they decided to engage this fight. What happens, I asked Johnson, if you lose? It wasn't the courts I was talking about, exactly, but rather the broad limits of public acceptance. Thirty-one years ago, only the most politically pragmatic right-to-life leaders believed Americans could grow accustomed to the idea that abortion was to be available as an elective medical procedure all over the country; the movement's rank-and-filers were sure, in the first months after *Roe* v. *Wade*, that they had only to explain clearly enough what had happened, and then a constitutional amendment or a reversal would soon put everything back the way it had been. What if they should turn out to be wrong about this, too? What if, in the end, Johnson and his colleagues discover that people have looked at all there is to see, inside a working abortion clinic, and concluded that there *is* no procedure too distressing to be legal?

I didn't hear anything for a minute, and I thought the line had gone dead. Then Johnson said, "Somebody famous, I can't remember who it was now, said, 'Man, the brute, can get used to anything.' There is that. But I think most people of ordinary sensibilities, when they come face to face with this sort of brutality toward a member of the human family—they do find it shocking. If *Roe* v. *Wade* is overturned, then we're in the world where people we elect get to decide these things, and that would be a big step in the right direction. In the end, if we can't persuade people that unborn members of the human family deserve protection, then they're not going to be protected."

"Not for the faint," read the opening line in a San Francisco legal newspaper article, summing up the proceedings, and it wasn't until after the trial had ended that I began to understand my own disorientation—this feeling that something important was underway but that I was unable to see it, as though it kept hovering

at the periphery of my vision. Squeamishness, I had assumed, like my inability to look at the movie screen when the bloody part comes on; this is what comes of letting the litigators shoo the P.R.-conscious advocates away and fling open the door to the procedure room. *Here it is, people. Deal with it.* Eventually, though, it seemed to me that part of the reason my head hurt was that all of us in the courtroom were staring in the wrong direction. There is a sober, profoundly difficult public conversation to be had about second- and third-trimester abortion in this country: about whether it is or is not appropriate for the law to continue regarding a twenty-two-week abortion as a private woman-doctor decision, for example. (The United States is one of a very few Western countries whose laws require no justification at all for abortion before viability; in many European countries with liberal first-trimester policies, a legal line is drawn somewhere between twelve and eighteen weeks.*) What is the point in the developing fetal life at which the reason for ending it becomes the state's business, our collective business? If viability is properly that point, is it sensible or is it evasive to maintain the post-viability catch-all of "all factors" health? What would happen if we opened the floor to straightforward talk about fetal-deformity abortions? What do we want to do with the late-abortion cases that don't arouse widespread sympathy when their circumstances are explained—not the hyperbolic prom-dress girl but the real-world messes that show up in clinics every day: the woman whose life is a disaster, the fourteen-year-old who's been hiding it under baggy clothes? Is it right or wrong to differentiate between them and the woman who doesn't receive the Down syndrome diagnosis until after she has picked out the baby's name?

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban argument is not this conversation, and part of the *Roe* v. *Wade* legacy has been warring camps whose all-or-nothing agendas—the sanctity of prenatal life, or the inviolability of the pregnant woman's autonomy—work against our being able to have it. Bring up the European model with an American pro-choice leader, and the conversation makes two quick turns: first, to the observation that most American states have ended public abortion funding, so that poor women trying to come up with payment money are sometimes pushed into later abortion by the very system right-to-lifers helped create. But there's something deeper than that at work. *Roe* was a privacy ruling, declaring that the right to abortion was part of a woman's constitutional right to privacy, and over the years defending *Roe* has come to mean defending that privacy so completely and so ferociously that almost any expression of public concern for the fetus is received as a threat, a step onto the famous slippery slope, at the bottom of which lie the septic abortion wards of the pre-legalization years. Right-to-life strategists knew how well this adamancy would work in their favor when they rolled out the first partial-birth legislation, and they will try to capitalize on it again starting this fall, when their lead agenda item will be the Unborn Child Pain Awareness Act, the next incarnation of the force-the-visuals campaign which has all the explosive public relations potential of its predecessor, minus (so far, at least) a good set of drawings. "Full-court press," the New Jersey Republican congressman Chris Smith has said, describing the vigor with which he and his Senate colleague Sam Brownback (R., Kansas) intend to push their memorably named legislation; the bill doesn't directly restrict abortion but instead mandates that every woman having an abortion at twenty weeks or more be told beforehand, by her abortion provider, that "there is substantial evidence that the process of being killed in an abortion will cause the unborn child pain."

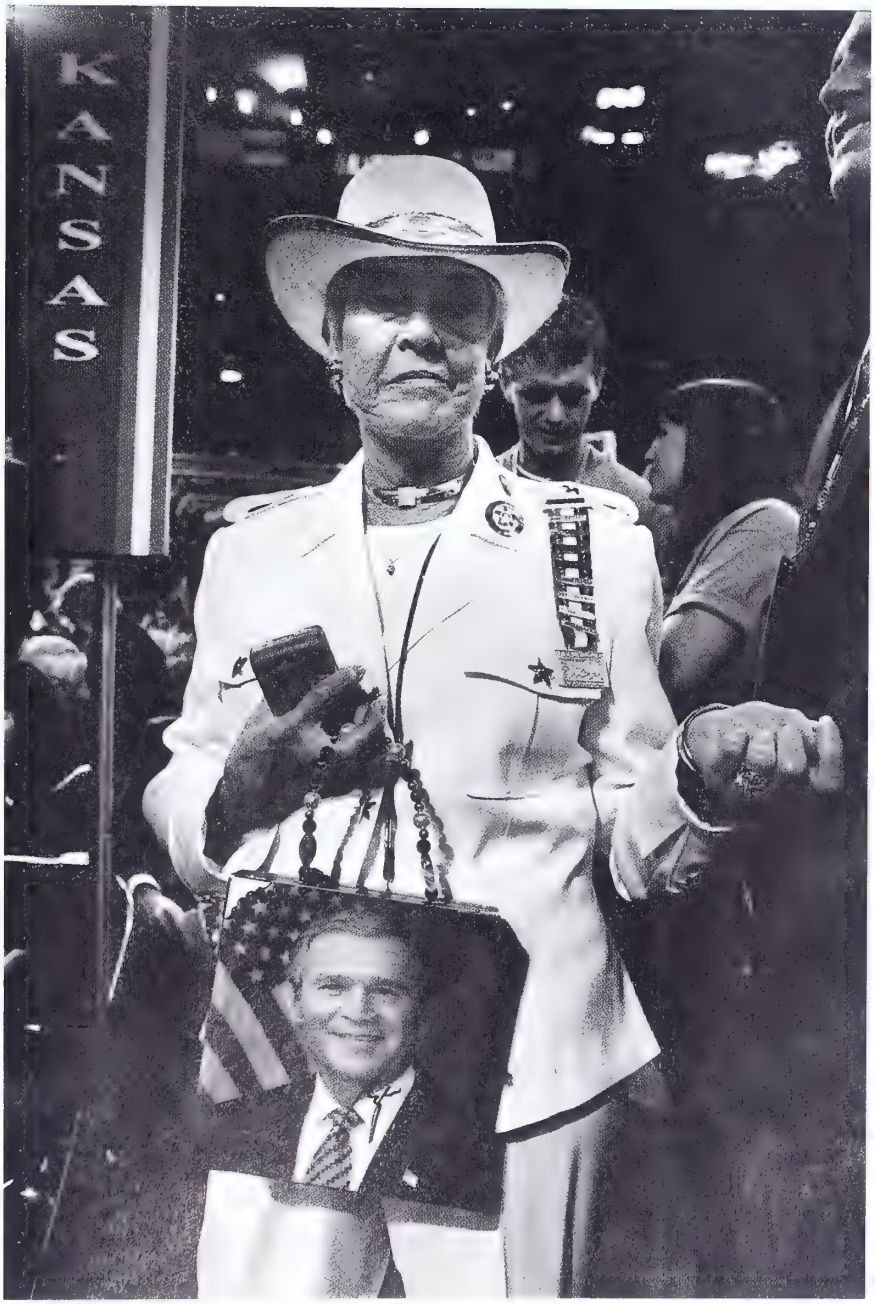
There's more: the bill requires that the woman, after receiving this information, be offered an anesthetic specifically for the "pain-capable unborn child." The woman must accept or decline the anesthetic, in writing, by signing an Unborn Child Pain Awareness Decision Form. The line up of practical objections presents itself at once—the obligatory vocabulary is politically loaded, there's no scientific consensus on the fetal pain question; the administration of separate anesthesia could pose a physical risk to the woman and drive up the cost of the procedure. But the real detonation device is the central proposition that a woman requesting a late abortion ought to be forced by law to envision what she is about to do as an act that might, at the very least, cause a sentient being pain. Who's going to take *that* on in public, and how? "This is the next one," an abortion-rights veteran told me early this summer as the new legislation was circulating among weary survivors of the partial-birth brawl. "Everybody takes it very seriously. And nobody knows exactly what to do about it."

*In France and Finland, for example, abortions after the twelfth week are supposed to require special approval and be performed only for certain specified reasons. German law says that any post-twelve-week abortion may be prosecutable unless a second physician certifies it necessary to "avert a danger to life or the danger of a grave impairment of the physical or emotional state of health of the pregnant woman." Iceland has a sixteen-week cutoff, after which the only acceptable reasons are fetal deformity or danger to the woman's health. In England, politicians this summer began a debate on moving the cutoff for what are informally called "social reasons" abortions (available, with two doctors' approval) from twenty-four weeks back to as early as twelve weeks.*

# FOUR MORE YEARS

## Republicans in black and white

*By Peter Turnley*




A member of the Kansas delegation on the Convention floor, shortly before George W. Bush's speech, September 2, 2004

Harper's Magazine *contributing editor Peter Turnley is a photographer based in Paris and New York City. He has published four books of photographs, including* Moments of Revolution, Parisians, *and* In Times of War and Peace.







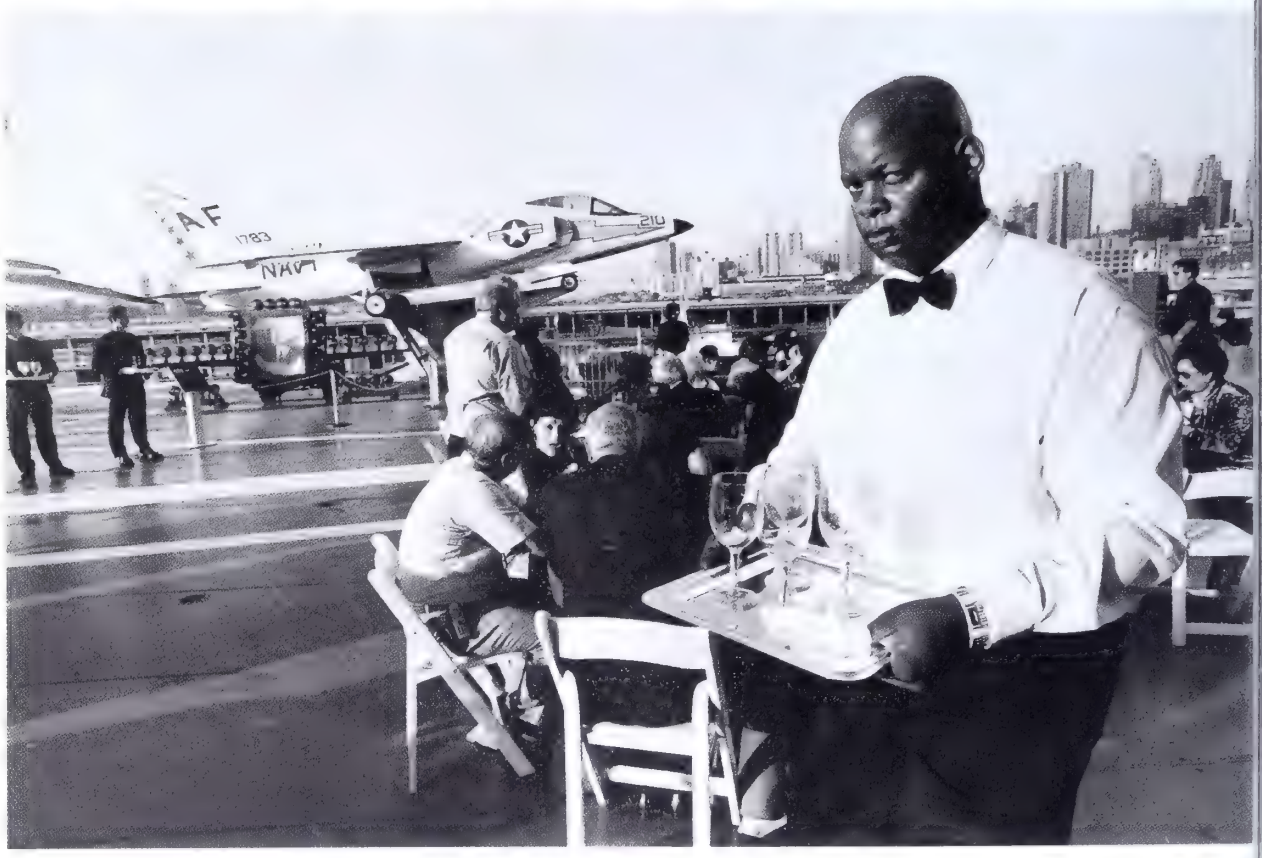
Members of the Republican Senatorial Inner Circle and the Republican Presidential Roundtable at a reception hosted by the National Republic Senatorial Committee (NRSC) on the deck of the USS *Intrepid* Museum. Members of these groups make annual or lifelong financial contributions to the NRSC. The woman in the top photograph is the Countess Stéphanie de Paris, a member of the Republican Senatorial Inner Circl





n the deck of the USS *Intrepid*, August 29
n the floor of the Republican National Convention, September 1



A Bush supporter and a protester exchange opinions across the street fro
Madison Square Garden at the mass protest against the Bush Administration, August 2
On the deck of the USS *Intrepid*, August 2



On the deck of the USS *Intrepid*, August 24



The Magazine Publishers Association (MPA) hosts a party aboard the Forbes yacht, *The Highlander*, docked at Chelsea Piers in New York City, August 31.







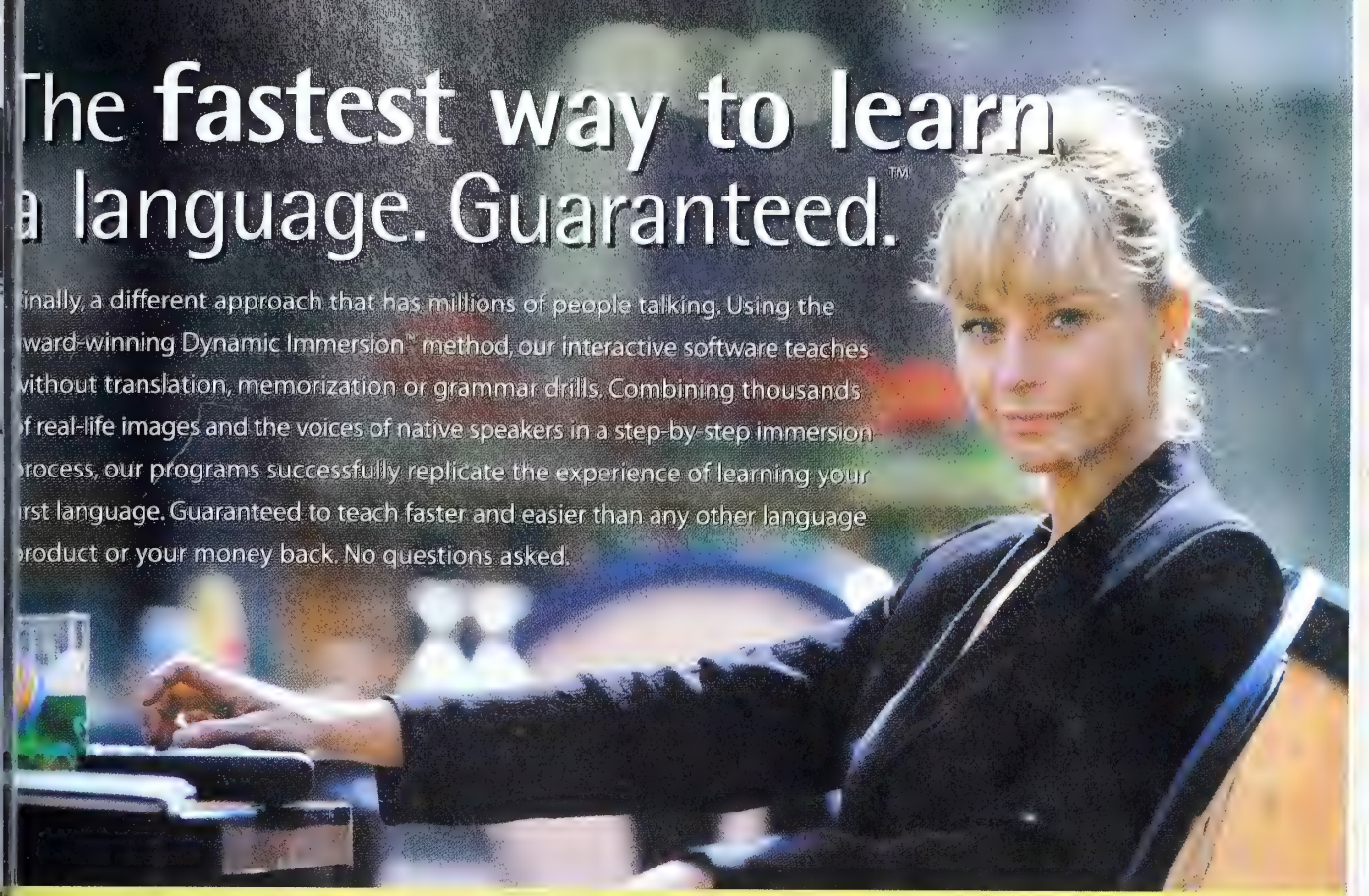
t a reception, at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, hosted by Governor George Pataki and the New York Republican delegation, September 2.
t an Intercessory Prayer Meeting hosted by the National Federation of Republican Assemblies at the New Yorker Hotel, August 31.






A subway rider at the Penn Station stop, on September 1, after the end of the third night of the convention.
One event attended that night was hosted by the Club for Growth, on August 30, the first day of the convention. Many of the breakfast guests were people who make large financial contributions to the Republican Party.

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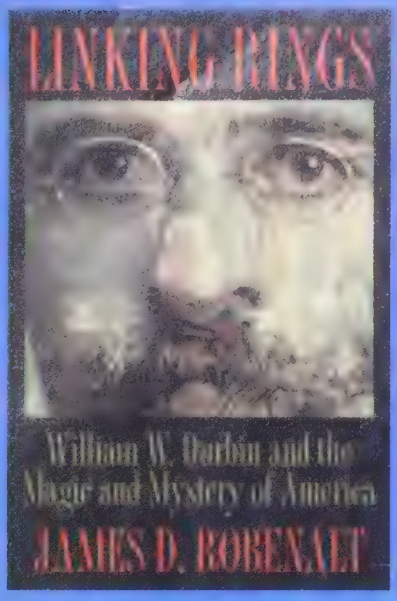
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# QUITTING THE PAINT FACTORY

## On the virtues of idleness

*By Mark Slouka*

*Love yields to business. If you seek a way out of love, be busy; you'll be safe, then.*
—Ovid, *Remedia Amoris*

I distrust the perpetually busy; always have. The frenetic ones, spinning in tight little circles like poisoned rats. The slower ones, grinding away their fourscore and ten in righteousness and pain. They are the soul-eaters.

When I was young, my parents read me Aesop's fable of "The Ant and the Grasshopper," wherein, as everyone knows, the grasshopper spends the summer making music in the sun while the ant toils with his fellow *formicidae*. Inevitably, winter comes, as winters will, and the grasshopper, who hasn't planned ahead and who doesn't know what a 401K is, has run out of luck. When he shows up at the ants' door, carrying his fiddle, the ant asks him what he was doing all year. "I was singing, if you please," the grasshopper replies, or something to that effect. "You were singing?" says the ant. "Well, then, go and sing." And perhaps because I sensed, even then, that fate would someday find me holding a violin or a manuscript at the door of the ants, my antennae frozen and my bills overdue, I confounded both Aesop and my well-meaning parents, and bore away the wrong moral. That summer, many a wind-blown grasshopper was saved from the pond, and many an anthill inundated under the golden rain of my pee.

I was right.

In the lifetime that has passed since Calvin Coolidge gave his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in which he famously proclaimed that "the chief business of the American people is business," the dominion of the ants has grown enormously. Look about: The business of business is everywhere and inescapable; the song of the buyers and the sellers never

*Mark Slouka is the author, most recently, of the novel* God's Fool. *He teaches in Columbia University's School of the Arts. His last essay for* Harper's Magazine, *"Arrow and Wound," appeared in the May 2003 issue.*

IDLENESS IS NOT JUST A PSYCHOLOGICAL NECESSITY; IT CONSTITUTES AS WELL A KIND OF POLITICAL SPACE, A SPACE NECESSARY TO DEMOCRACY

stops; the term "workaholic" has been folded up and put away. W
have no time for our friends or our families, no time
think or to make a meal. We're moving product, whi
the soul drowns like a cat in a well."

A resuscitated orthodoxy, so pervasive as to be nearly invisible, rul
the land. Like any religion worth its salt, it shapes our world in its image, d
monizing if necessary, absorbing when possible. Thus has the great sovereig
territory of what Nabokov called "unreal estate," the continent of invisib
possessions from time to talent to contentment, been either infantilized, re
dered unclean, or translated into the grammar of dollars and cents. Thus h
the great wilderness of the inner life been compressed into a median strip b
the demands of the "real world," which of course is anything but. Thus ha
we succeeded in transforming even ourselves into bipedal products, payi
richly for seminars that teach us how to market the self so it may be sold
the highest bidder. Or perhaps "down the river" is the phrase.

Ah, but here's the rub: Idleness is not just a psychological necessity, re
uisite to the construction of a complete human being; it constitutes as w
a kind of political space, a space as necessary to the workings of an actu
democracy as, say, a free press. How does it do this? By allowing us time
figure out who we are, and what we believe; by allowing us time to consid
what is unjust, and what we might do about it. By giving the inner life (in who
precincts we are most ourselves) its due. Which is precisely what makes idl
ness dangerous. All manner of things can grow out of that fallow soil. Not f
nothing did our mothers grow suspicious when we had "too much time on o
hands." They knew we might be up to something. And not for nothing d
we whisper to each other, when we *were* up to something, "Quick, look busy

Mother knew instinctively what the keepers of the castles have alwa
known: that trouble—the kind that might threaten the symmetry of a we
ordered garden—needs time to take root. Take away the time, therefore, a
you choke off the problem before it begins. Obedience reigns, the plow sta
in the furrow; things proceed as they must. Which raises an uncomfortab
question: Could the Church of Work—which today has Americans aspi
ing to sleep deprivation the way they once aspired to a personal knowled
of God—be, at base, an anti-democratic force? Well, yes. James Russe
Lowell, that nineteenth-century workhorse, summed it all up quite neatl
"There is no better ballast for keeping the mind steady on its keel, and sa
ing it from all risk of crankiness, than business."

Quite so. The mind, however, particularly the mind of a citizen in a d
mocratic society, is not a boat. Ballast is not what it needs, and steadine
alas, can be a synonym for stupidity, as our current administration has so a
ply demonstrated. No, what the democratic mind requires, above all,
time; time to consider its options. Time to develop the democratic virtu
of independence, orneriness, objectivity, and fairness. Time, perhaps (
sail along with Lowell's leaky metaphor for a moment), to ponder the cou
our unelected captains have so generously set for us, and to consider mutin
when the iceberg looms.

Which is precisely why we need to be kept busy. If we have no time
think, to mull, if we have no time to piece together the sudden associatio
and unexpected, mid-shower insights that are the stuff
independent opinion, then we are less citizens than curso
easily manipulated, vulnerable to the currents of power.

But I have to be careful here. Having worked all of my adult life
recognize that work of one sort or another is as essential to survival as pr

*"I think that there is far too much work done in the world," Bertrand Russell obser
in his famous 1932 essay "In Praise of Idleness," adding that he hoped to "start a ca
paign to induce good young men to do nothing." He failed. A year later, National S
cialism, with its cult of work (think of all those bronzed young men in Leni Riefenstah
Triumph of the Will throwing cordwood to each other in the sun), flared in Germany*

ı, and that much of it, in today's highly bureaucratized, economically ersified societies, will of necessity be neither pleasant nor challenging particularly meaningful. I have compassion for those making the most heir commute and their cubicle; I just wish they could be a little less erful about it. In short, this isn't about us so much as it is about the *geist* we live and labor in, which, like a cuckoo taking over a thrush's t, has systematically shoved all the other eggs of our life, one by one, o the pavement. It's about illuminating the losses.
We're enthralled. I want to dis-enchant us a bit; draw a mustache on the s.

**FINITE BUSTLE**

'm a student of the narrowing margins. And their victim, to some extent, ugh my capacity for sloth, my belief in it, may yet save me. Like some stub- ı heretic in fifth-century Rome, still offering gifts to the spirit of the fields ın as the priests sniff about the *tempa* for sin, I daily sacrifice my bit of time. ɛ pagan gods may yet return. Constantine and Theodosius may die. But prospects are bad.
ı Riverside Park in New York City, where I walk these days, the legions weekend nannies" are growing, setting up a play date for a ten- -old requires a feat of near-Olympic coordination, and the few, igial, late-afternoon parents one sees, dragging their wailing geny by the hand or frantically kicking a soccer ball in the fad- light, have a gleam in their eyes I find frightening. No out- tched legs crossed at the ankles, no arms draped over the back ıe bench. No lovers. No be-hatted old men, arguing. Between slide and the sandbox, a very fit young man ın his early thir- is talking on his cell phone while a two-year-old with a trail not running from his nose tugs on the seam of his corduroy ts. "There's no way I can pick it up. Because we're still at the c. Because we just got here, that's why."
's been one hundred and forty years since Thoreau, who itched l century before everyone else began to scratch, complained that world was increasingly just "a place of business. What an infi- bustle!" he groused. "I am awaked almost every night by the ting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no Sab- ı. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is hing but work, work, work." Little did he know. Today the ls of commerce, paved and smoothed, reach into every nook and ny of the republic; there is no place apart, no place where we ld be shut of the drone of that damnable traffic. Today we, quite ally, live to work. And it hardly matters what kind of work we the process justifies the ends. Indeed, at times it seems there ardly an occupation, however useless or humiliating or down- t despicable, that cannot at least in part be redeemed by our essive dedication to it: "Yes, Ted sold shoulder-held Stingers to folks with urname, but he worked so *hard*!"
Not long ago, at the kind of dinner party I rarely attend, I made the mis- e of admitting that I not only liked to sleep but liked to get at least eight rs a night whenever possible, and that nine would be better still. The tion—a complex Pinot Noir of nervous laughter displaced by expres- ıs of disbelief and condescension—suggested that my transgression had ı, on some level, a political one. I was reminded of the time I'd confessed Roger Angell that I did not much care for baseball.
My comment was immediately rebutted by testimonials to sleeplessness: of the nine guests confessed to being insomniacs; a member of the demy of Arts and Letters claimed indignantly that she couldn't re- nber when she had *ever* gotten eight hours of sleep; two other guests de- ed themselves grateful for five or six. It mattered little that I'd arranged



IT'S BEEN ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY YEARS SINCE THOREAU COMPLAINED THAT THE WORLD WAS INCREASINGLY JUST "A PLACE OF BUSINESS"

rations by Brad Yeo

FORGET THE VISIONS OF SANCTIONED LEISURE: THE VIEW FROM THE DECK IN ST. MORITZ, THE WAFER-THIN TV. CONSIDER THE PRICE

my life differently, and accepted the sacrifices that arrangement entailed. Eight hours! There was something willful about it. Arrogant, even. Suitably chastened, I held my tongue and escaped alone to tell Thee.

Increasingly, it seems to me, our world is dividing into two kinds of things: those that aid work, or at least represent a path to it, and those that don't. Things in the first category are good and noble; things in the second aren't. Thus, for example, education is good (as long as we don't have to listen to any of that "end in itself" nonsense) because it will presumably lead to work. Thus playing the piano or swimming the 100-yard backstroke are good things for a fifteen-year-old to do *not* because they might give her some pleasure but because rumor has it that Princeton is interested in students who can play Chopin or swim quickly on their backs (and a degree from Princeton, as any fool knows, can be readily converted to work).

Point the beam anywhere, and there's the God of Work, busily trampling out the vintage. Blizzards are bemoaned because they keep us from getting to work. Hobbies are seen as either ridiculous or self-indulgent because they interfere with work. Longer school days are all the rage (even as our children grow demonstrably stupider), not because they make education, or psychological or any other kind of sense but because keeping kids in school longer makes it easier for us to work. Meanwhile, the time grows short, the margin narrows; the white spaces on our calendars have been inked in for months. We're angry about this, upset about that, but who has the time to do anything anymore? There are those reports to report on, memos to remember, emails to deflect or delete. They bury us like snow.



The alarm rings and we're off, running so hard that by the time we stop we're too tired to do much of anything except nod in front of the TV, which, like virtually all the other voices in our culture, endorses our exhaustion, fetishizes and romanticizes it and, by daily adding its little trowelful of lies and omissions, helps cement the conviction that not only is this how our three score and ten must be spent but that the transaction is both noble and necessary.

**KA-CHINK!**

Time may be money (though I've always resisted that loaf of some platitude, the alchemy by which the very gold of our lives is transformed into the base lead of commerce), but one thing seems certain: Money eats time. Forget the visions of sanctioned leisure: the view from the deck in St. Moritz, the wafer-thin TV. Consider the price.

Sometimes, I want to say, money costs too much. And at the beginning of the millennium, in this country, the cost of money is well on the way to bankrupting us. We're impoverishing ourselves, our families, our communities—and yet we can't stop ourselves. Worse, we don't want to.

Seen from the right vantage point, there's something wonderfully animistic about it. The god must be fed; he's hungry for our hours, craves our days and years. And we oblige. Every morning (unlike the good citizens of Tenochtitlán, who at least had the good sense to sacrifice others on the slab) we rush up the steps of the ziggurat to lay ourselves down. It's not a pretty sight.

Then again, we've been well trained. And the training never stops. In a recent ad in *The New York Times Magazine*, paid for by an outfit named Wealth and Tax Advisory Services, Inc., an attractive young woman in a dark business suit is shown working at her desk. (She may be at home, though these days the distinction is moot.) On the desk is a cup, a c

one, and an adding machine. Above her right shoulder, just over the rred sofa and the blurred landscape on the wall, are the words, "Suc-ssful entrepreneurs work continuously." The text below explains: "The allenge to building wealth is that your finances grow in complexity as ur time demands increase."

The ad is worth disarticulating, it seems to me, if only because some ver-n of it is beamed into our cerebral cortex a thousand times a day. What's teresting about it is not only what it says but what it so blithely assumes. hat it says, crudely enough, is that in order to be successful, we must not ly work but work *continuously;* what it assumes is that time is inversely pro-rtional to wealth: our time demands *will* increase the harder we work and e more successful we become. It's an organic thing; a law, almost. Fish got-swim and birds gotta fly, you gotta work like a dog till you die.

Am I suggesting then that Wealth and Tax Advisory Services, Inc. end $60,000 for a full-page ad in *The New York Times Magazine* to show a young woman at her desk writing poetry? Or playing with her kids? sharing a glass of wine with a friend, attractively thumbing her nose at e acquisition of wealth? No. For one thing, the folks at Wealth and ax, etc. are simply doing what's in their best interest. For another, it uld hardly matter if they did show the woman writing poetry, or laugh-g with her children, because these things, by virtue of their placement the ad, would immediately take on the color of their host; they would nply be the rewards of working *almost* continuously.

What I am suggesting is that just as the marketplace has co-opted rebel-n by subordinating politics to fashion, by making anger chic, so it has qui-y underwritten the idea of leisure, in part by separating it from idleness. en almost any magazine in America today and there they are: The ubiq-ous tanned-and-toned twenty-somethings driving the $70,000 fruits of their or; the moneyed-looking men and women in their healthy sixties (to e the young something to aspire to) tossing Frisbees to Irish setters or ty-g on flies in midstream or watching sunsets from their Adirondack chairs. Leisure is permissible, we understand, because it costs money; idleness is t, because it doesn't. Leisure is focused; whatever thinking it requires is sorbed by a certain task: sinking that putt, making that cast, watching that t-screen TV. Idleness is unconstrained, anarchic. Leisure—particularly if nvolves some kind of high-priced technology—is as American as a Fourth July barbecue. Idleness, on the other hand, has a bad attitude. It doesn't ave; it's not a member of the team; it doesn't play well with others. It thinks o much, as my high school coach used to say. So it has to be ostracized.*

With idleness safely on the reservation, the notion that leisure is neces-ily a function of money is free to grow into a truism. "Money isn't the goal. ur goals, that's the goal," reads a recent ad for Citibank. At first glance, ere's something appealingly subversive about it. Apply a little skepticism ough, and the implicit message floats to the surface: And how else are you ing to reach those goals than by investing wisely with us? Which suggests at, um, money *is* the goal, after all.

### HE CHURCH OF WORK

There's something un-American about singing the virtues of idleness. It a form of blasphemy, a secular sin. More precisely, it is a kind of latter-y antinomianism, as much a threat to the orthodoxy of our day as Anne tchinson's desire 350 years ago to circumvent the Puritan ministers

LEISURE IS PERMISSIBLE, BECAUSE IT COSTS MONEY. IDLENESS IS NOT, BECAUSE IT DOESN'T. LEISURE IS FOCUSED; IDLENESS IS UNCONSTRAINED, ANARCHIC

*r put to good use. The wilderness of association we enter when we read, for example, me of the world's great domains of imaginative diversity: a seedbed of individualism. at better reason to pave it then, to make it an accessory, like a personal organizer, a e-fire way of raising your SAT score, or improving your communication skills for that t interview. You say you like to read? Then don't waste your time; put it to work.* der Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on Business Stage, *with its picture of the bard in a business suit on the cover.*

IT'S VERY CHRISTIAN: YOU MUST TRAIN YOURSELF TO BELIEVE THAT THE OUTSOURCING OF YOUR LIFE IS NATURAL AND GOOD. BUT YOUR SOUL WILL NOT BE SAVED

and dial God direct. Hutchinson, we recall, got into trouble because she accused the Puritan elders of backsliding from the rigors of their theology and giving in to a Covenant of Works, whereby the individual could earn his all-expenses-paid trip to the pearly gates through the labor of his hands rather than solely through the grace of God. Think of it as a kind of frequent-flier plan for the soul.

The analogy to today is instructive. Like the New England clergy, the Religion of Business—literalized, painfully, in books like *Jesus, C.E.O.*—holds a monopoly on interpretation; it sets the terms, dictates value.* Although today's version of the Covenant of Works has substituted a host of secular pleasures for the idea of heaven, it too seeks to corner the market on what we most desire, to suggest that the work of our hands will save us. And we believe. We believe across all the boundaries of class and race and ethnicity that normally divide us; we believe in numbers that dwarf those of the more conventionally faithful. We repeat the daily catechism, we sing in the choir. And we tithe, and keep on tithing, until we are spent.

It is this willingness to hand over our lives that fascinates and appalls me. There's such a lovely perversity to it; it's so wonderfully counterintuitive, so very Christian: You must empty your pockets, turn them inside out, and spill out your wife and your son, the pets you hardly knew, and the days you simply missed altogether watching the sunlight fade on the bricks across the way. You must hand over the rainy afternoons, the light on the grass, the moments of play and of simply being. You must give it up, all of it, and by your example teach your children to do the same, and then—because even this is not enough—you must train yourself to believe that this outsourcing of your life is both natural and good. But even so, your soul will not be saved.

The young, for a time, know better. They balk at the harness. They do not go easy. For a time they are able to see the utter sadness of subordinating all that matters to all that doesn't. Eventually, of course, sitting in their cubicle lined with *New Yorker* cartoons, selling whatever it is they've been asked to sell, most come to see the advantage of enthusiasm. They join the choir and are duly forgiven for their illusions. It's a rite of passage we are all familiar with. The generations before us clear the path; Augustine stands to the left, Freud to the right. We are born into death, and die into life, they murmur; civilization will have its discontents. The sign in front of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Work confirms it. And we believe.

All of which leaves only the task of explaining away those few miscreants who out of some inner weakness or perversity either refuse to convert or who go along and then, in their thirty-sixth year in the choir, say, abruptly abandon the faith. Those in the first category are relatively easy to contend with; they are simply losers. Those in the second are a bit more difficult; their apostasy requires something more . . . dramatic. They are considered mad.

In one of my favorite anecdotes from American literary history (which my children know by heart, and which in turn bodes poorly for their future as captains of industry), the writer Sherwood Anderson found himself, at the age of thirty-six, the chief owner and general manager of a paint factory in Elyria, Ohio. Having made something of a reputation for himself as a copywriter in a Chicago advertising agency, he'd moved up a rung. He was on his way, as they say, a businessman in the making, perhaps even a tycoon in embryo. There was only one problem: he couldn't seem to shake the notion that the work he was doing (writing circulars extolling the virtues of his line of paints) was patently absurd, undignified, that it amounted to a kind of prison sentence. Lacking the rationalizing gene, incapable of numbing himself sufficiently to make the days and the

* *In this new lexicon, for example, "work" is defined as the means to wealth; "success" as a synonym for it.*

ırs pass without pain, he suffered and flailed. Eventually he snapped. It was a scene he would revisit time and again in his memoirs and fic- n. On November 27, 1912, in the middle of dictating a letter to his retary ("The goods about which you have inquired are the best of their id made in the . . ."), he simply stopped. According to the story, the two pposedly stared at each other for a long time, after which Anderson d: "I have been wading in a long river and my feet are wet," and walked t. Outside the building he turned east toward Cleveland and kept go- g. Four days later he was recognized and taken to a hospital, suffering m exhaustion.

Anderson claimed afterward that he had encouraged the impression that might be cracking up in order to facilitate his exit, to make it compre- nsible. "The thought occurred to me that if men thought me a little in- ne they would forgive me if I lit out," he wrote, and though we will nev- know for sure if he suffered a nervous breakdown that day or only pretended one (his biographers have concluded that he did), the point of the anec- te is elsewhere: Real or imagined, nothing short of madness would do for excuse.

Anderson himself, of course, was smart enough to recognize the absurdity all this, and to use it for his own ends; over the years that fol- ved, he worked his escape from the paint factory into a kind of rable of liberation, an exemplar for the young men of his age. ecame the cornerstone of his critique of the emerging business lture: To stay was to suffocate, slowly; to escape was to take a b at "aliveness." What America needed, Anderson argued, was ew class of individuals who "at any physical cost to themselves d others" would "agree to quit working, to loaf, to refuse to be rried or try to get on in the world."

"To refuse to be hurried or try to get on in the world." It sounds ite mad. What would we do if we followed that advice? And o would we be? No, better to pull down the blinds, finish that ntence. We're all in the paint factory now.



**EARING BRUSH**

At times you can almost see it, this flypaper we're attached this mechanism we labor in, this delusion we inhabit. A ing of such magnitude can be hard to make out, of course, but u can rough out its shape and mark its progress, like Lon haney's Invisible Man, by its effects: by the things it renders aint or obsolete, by the trail of discarded notions it leaves be- nd. What we're leaving behind today, at record pace, is what- er belief we might once have had in the value of unstructured ne: in the privilege of contemplating our lives before they are ne, in the importance of uninterrupted conversation, in the auty of play. In the thing in itself—unmediated, leading nowhere. In the esent moment.

Admittedly, the present—in its ontological, rather than consumerist, nse—has never been too popular on this side of the Atlantic; we've always en a finger-drumming, restless bunch, suspicious of jawboning, less likely sit at the table than to grab a quick one at the bar. Whitman might have horted us to loaf and invite our souls, but that was not an invitation we cared extend, not unless the soul played poker, ha, ha. No sir, a Frenchman ght invite his soul. One expected such things. But an American? An

> American would be out the swinging doors and halfway to tomorrow before his silver dollar had stopped ringing on the counter.

I was put in mind of all this last June while sitting on a bench in ndon's Hampstead Heath. My bench, like many others, was almost en-

WHAT AMERICA NEEDED, ARGUED SHERWOOD ANDERSON, WAS A NEW CLASS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WOULD "AGREE TO QUIT WORKING, TO LOAF . . ."

THIS WASN'T SIMPLY OUTDOOR WORK, WHICH I KNEW WELL. THIS WAS BRUSH CLEARING AS A STATEMENT OF IMPATIENCE. IT CAPTURED THE MAN

tirely hidden; well off the path, delightfully overgrown, it sat at the top o a long-grassed meadow. It had a view. There was whimsy in its placement and joy. It was thoroughly impractical. It had clearly been placed there t encourage one thing—solitary contemplation.

And sitting there, listening to the summer drone of the bees, I sud denly imagined George W. Bush on my bench. I can't tell you why thi happened, or what in particular brought the image to my mind. Possi bly it was the sheer incongruity of it that appealed to me, the turtle-on a-lamppost illogic of it; earlier that summer, intrigued by images of Ka ka's face on posters advertising the Prague Marathon, I'd entertaine myself with pictures of Franz looking fit for the big race. In any cas my vision of Dubya sitting on a bench, reading a book on his lap- smiling or nodding in agreement, wetting a finger to turn a page—wa so discordant, so absurd, that I realized I'd accidentally stumbled upo one of those visual oxymorons that, by its very dissonance, illuminat something essential.

What the picture of George W. Bush flushed into the open for me wa the classically American and increasingly Republican cult of movemen of busy-ness; of doing, not thinking. One could imagine Kennedy readin on that bench in Hampstead Heath. Or Carter, maybe. Or even Clinto (though given the bucolic setting, one could also imagine him in othe more Dionysian scenarios). But Bush? Bush would be clearing brush. He' be stomping it into submission with his pointy boots. He'd be making th world a better place.

Now, something about all that brush clearing had always bothered m It wasn't the work itself, though I'd never fully understood where all th brush was being cleared from, or why, or how it was possible that there w any brush still left between Dallas and Austin. No, it was the fr netic, anti-thinking element of it I disliked. This wasn't simp outdoor work, which I had done my share of and knew wel This was brush clearing as a statement, a gesture of impatienc It captured the man, his disdain for the inner life, for the virtu of slowness and contemplation. This was movement as an answ to all those equivocating intellectuals and Gallic pontificators wh would rather talk than do, think than act. Who could always counted on to complicate what was simple with long-winded di cussions of complexity and consequences. Who were weak.



And then I had it, the thing I'd been trying to place, th thing that had always made me bristle—instinctively—whenev I saw our fidgety, unelected President in action. I recalled rea ing about an Italian art movement called Futurism, which ha flourished in the first decades of the twentieth century. Its pra titioners had advocated a cult of restlessness, of speed, of d namism; had rejected the past in all its forms; had glorified bus ness and war and patriotism. They had also, at least in theor supported the growth of fascism.

The link seemed tenuous at best, even facile. Was I seriou ly linking Bush—his shallowness, his bustle, his obvious susp cion of nuance—to the spirit of fascism? As much as I loath the man, it made me uneasy. I'd always argued with people wh applied the word carelessly. Having been called a fascist myse for suggesting that an ill-tempered rottweiler be put on a leas I had no wish to align myself with those who had downgrad the word to a kind of generalized epithet, roughly synonymous with "a hole," to be applied to whoever disagreed with them. I had too much r spect for the real thing. And yet there was no getting around it; what been picking up like a bad smell whenever I observed the Bush team in tion was the faint but unmistakable whiff of fascism; a democratically luted fascism, true, and masked by the perfume of down-home cookin', b fascism nonetheless.

Still, it was not until I'd returned to the States and had forced myself wade through the reams of Futurist manifestos—a form that obviously ke to their hearts—that the details of the connection began to come ar. The linkage had nothing to do with the Futurists' art, which was able only for its sustained mediocrity, nor with their writing, which times achieved an almost sublime level of badness. It had to do, ner, with their ant-like energy, their busy-ness, their utter disdain of the manifestations of the inner life, and with the way these traits med so organically linked in their thinking to aggression and war. 'e intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia," wrote Filip- Marinetti, perhaps the Futurists' most breathless spokesman. "We l glorify war—the world's only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the tructive gesture of freedom-bringers. . . . We will destroy the muse- s, libraries, academies of every kind. . . . We will sing of great crowds ited by work."

Militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers," "a erish insomnia," "great crowds excited by work" . . . I knew that song. d yet still, almost perversely, I resisted the recognition. It was too easy, nehow. Wasn't much of the Futurist rant ("Take up your pickaxes, your s and hammers and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly") sim- a gesture of adolescent rebellion, a FUCK YOU scrawled on Dad's garage or? I had just about decided to scrap the whole thing when I came oss Marinetti's later and more extended version of the Futurist creed. d this time the connection was impossible to deny.

n the piece, published in June of 1913 (roughly six months after An- son walked out of the paint factory), Marinetti explained that Futur- was about the "acceleration of life to today's swift pace." It was about "dread of the old and the known . . . of quiet living." The new age, he ote, would require the "negation of distances and nostalgic solitudes." would "ridicule . . . the 'holy green silence' and the ineffable land- pe." It would be, instead, an age enamored of "the passion, art, and alism of Business."

This shift from slowness to speed, from the solitary individual to the wd excited by work, would in turn force other adjustments. The wor- p of speed and business would require a new patriotism, "a heroic ideal- ion of the commercial, industrial, and artistic solidarity of a people"; it uld require "a modification in the idea of war," in order to make it "the essary and bloody test of a people's force."

As if this weren't enough, as if the parallel were not yet sufficiently ar, there was this: The new man, Marinetti wrote—and this deserves italics—would communicate by "*brutally destroying the syntax of his ech. He wastes no time in building sentences. Punctuation and the right ad- ives will mean nothing to him. He will despise subtleties and nuances of lan- ge.*" All of his thinking, moreover, would be marked by a "*dread of wness, pettiness, analysis, and detailed explanations. Love of speed, abbrevi- n, and the summary. 'Quick, give me the whole thing in two words!'*"

Short of telling us that he would have a ranch in Crawford, Texas, l be given to clearing brush, nothing Marinetti wrote could have de the resemblance clearer. From his notorious mangling of the Eng- h language to his well-documented impatience with detail and analy- to his chuckling disregard for human life (which enabled him to ck jokes about Aileen Wuornos's execution as well as mug for the neras minutes before announcing that the nation was going to war), bya was Marinetti's "New Man": impatient, almost pathologically un- ective, unburdened by the past. A man untroubled by the imagina- n, or by an awareness of human frailty. A leader wonderfully attuned ough one doubted he could ever articulate it) to "today's swift pace"; the necessity of forging a new patriotism; to the idea of war as "the essary and bloody test of a people's force"; to the all-conquering uty of Business. ■

"MILITARISM, PATRIOTISM, THE DESTRUCTIVE GESTURE OF FREEDOM-BRINGERS," "GREAT CROWDS EXCITED BY WORK" . . . I KNEW THAT SONG

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# GRAND OLD INQUISITOR

## The Republican Party's gift of innocence

*By Luke Mitchell*

When I left the Republican National Convention in September, I was awe and a little depressed, as if some- e or something had told me to go ck myself, and had told me with a nd of meticulous exactitude that was erwhelming and irrefutable. wasn't ideological, and it was ore than lies. No particular rds had done it. It was their ckless profusion, the ceaseless le of pointless language churn- g through Madison Square arden, crashing against the alls, losing more meaning with ery dyslogic wave. Politicians ve spoken self-serving non- nse since the beginning of ne, as the Democrats them- lves had demonstrated a nth before in Boston, but this s different. It was larger, more lculated. Whereas Kerry had uggled to create meaning— matter how stupid, dishonest, clichéd that meaning was— sh's team seemed actively to plotting its demise.

Certainly the headline eeches meant nothing. Yes, e President, with his "calling from yond the stars," spoke in the cod- language of the Rapture, but the de once broken contained only a single message, which was in fact a meta-message: "I am speaking in code to Christians." Other combinations of words slipped the bonds of meaning entirely. Did Arnold Schwarzenegger somehow end the Cold War in Austria? Was George Bush a war hero? Did John Kerry want to destroy America? These were half-narratives, made up of questions so preposterous as to end discussion and possibly even subvert our understanding of what it means to mean something. The real message was not "I care," or even "vote for me." The real message, radiating from the podium and echoing through the rafters, was that there was no message.



That soul-negating echo was terrifying to me, and all the more terrifying because it was clearly the result of so much effort. Witting or not, everyone there was a participant. The Garden and its surrounding streets had been converted into a monstrous echo chamber, ring upon ring of technology-laden humanity: protesters with their signs and their chants, New York City cops with radios Velcroed to their shoulders, Treasury agents talking into their sleeves, the crush of delegates with their cell phones and their BlackBerrys —and reporters, 15,000 of them, writers with their wireless laptops, radiomen serenading their outsized microphones, surly camera crews, bright lights in tow, all of them connected by winding cable to rows of idling vans outside on Seventh Avenue, the microwave dishes on top sending signals to satellites miles above only to be sent right back down again, back into countless thousands more speakers and screens, bouncing, reflecting, blending, an overwhelming vortex of absurdities. All of it had been orchestrated with ruthless precision, and

*ke Mitchell is a senior editor of* Harper's *agazine. His last article for the magazine, 'he Osama Endorsement," appeared in the October issue.*

stration by Steve Brodner

you couldn't say a word about it because if you did it wouldn't mean a thing.

I tried to describe the maddening echo of the place to another editor I know, a man who had spent some years teaching the great books to high school kids in Texas. He put his finger on it right away. "It's the Marabar Caves," he said. "Go look at *A Passage to India*."

So I looked. He was almost impossibly right. E. M. Forster had somehow captured, in 1924, the essence of the 2004 Republican National Convention—not just my reaction to the Garden but the *feel* of the place. In the scene my friend had in mind, the elderly Mrs. Moore has found herself on a long day trip out of Chandrapore, her destination the famous Marabar Caves. Inside the darkened chamber, she is confronted by an extraordinary and disturbing echo:

> Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. "Boum" is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or "bou-oum," or "ou-boum,"—utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "boum." Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once, an overlapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently.

That was it precisely. It was more than just the sound, though. It was the sameness of the sound. And here Forster was prescient once again:

> The crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life. Coming at a moment when she chanced to be fatigued, it had managed to murmur, "Pathos, piety, courage—they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value." If one had spoken vileness in that place, or spoken lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same: "ou-boum."

That was the convention. It was all the same—not a single position or conflicting position. But every position and no position. The words at the convention were like every color of the color wheel, spinning into white.

That spinning sensation—the whitening wheel, the whirling echo, the coiling snakes—was not merely symbolic. It was manifested in the very form of the Garden, itself a massive bowl of concentric rings, and in the constant circling of those rings by the thousands of reporters, politicians, and bagmen gathered there to do their work.

The top ring, where the skyboxes are, is a sort of circular luxury hotel, along the lines of a Wichita Ramada Inn, only each room has a view of the rock concert or basketball game or presidential speech taking place below. During the convention the rooms were occupied by networks and big contributors, and when the skybox doors were open you could see right through to the netted balloons and light-show rigging above the podium. Outside along the dim perimeter, reporters circulated endlessly on cardboard-protected carpets, hoping some kind of narrative would ooze out of the agglomeration of celebrity, money, and cameras.

In the weeks leading up to the convention, I'd formed an unconscious and somewhat naive conception of it as a theatrical performance in which some kind of story—likely offensive to me, but a story nonetheless—would unfold upon the center stage. Certainly that stage, surrounded as it was by thousands of enthusiastic Republicans and hundreds of cameras and microphones, was where a story *ought* to have taken place. There was the brightly lit podium, with its odd cruciform moldings; there was the massive video screen, a waving flag one minute, a gospel choir the next; there were the orators themselves, foreheads shining in the bright lights. But no story.

There was, if anything, a resistance to narrative. For instance, we had Sara Pyszka, introduced by U.S. Representative Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia. "Though unable to speak without the aid of her DynaVox, a computerized voice aid and confined to a wheelchair by disabilities including cerebral palsy," Capito said, "Sara Pyszka still manages to share her hope and optimism with thousands." That seemed promising. I expected that I would at some point learn what made Sara Pyszka optimistic. Had the local soda fountain taken up a collection in a cigar box to pay for the DynaVox? Had some Bush initiative allowed her to embrace the American dream at last? We never found out. Capito simply went on to say, "Please welcome Sara," who wheeled in silently from the wings. After a pause, a mechanical voice, presumably that of the DynaVox, recited the Pledge of Allegiance, and then, after another pause, Sara Pyszka rolled back to whatever story she was living outside the airless realm of the Republican National Convention. The only narrative was that of exploitation, as the producers couldn't be bothered even to finish the cliché.*

The rest of the show was no different. Before I could process the start of one cheap symbol, the producers were on to the next. Even the biographical video, typically the narrative high point of political conventions—*A Place Called Hope*, *Morning in America*—lacked momentum. Indeed, it was composed entirely of still images, panned in the manner of a Ken Burns documentary. Setup, climax, resolution—all of the elements of narrative—had become superfluous.

Up along the outer rings my thoughts turned naturally, if dismally, to Yeats and his "Second Coming," with its rough beasts and its center that failed to hold. After a few constricted circuits of the skyboxes with no real story in sight, I even began to envy the falcon his widening gyre.

Yeats, of course, has informed the despair of reporters and editors at least since Joan Didion borrowed

*I later learned that Pyszka had found a way to use her DynaVox to sing, and that July, in fact, she had performed the national anthem before a Cleveland Indians game. The story would have written itself.*

e from him to title "Slouching
wards Bethlehem," her brilliant
57 report for the *Saturday Evening*
st on the dark stink of the San
ncisco counterculture. The tenu-
s center, for Didion, was language.
the culture of the hippies, she saw
nething terrifying to anyone who
d stories for a living. It was a dis-
n for meaning itself, a nascent
t-narrative culture made up of lo-
hobes stacked up in old Victori-
houses. They found the whole
iness of articulation beneath con-
npt, an ego trip at best, and possi-
a plot by the Man. Didion wrote:
ney feed back exactly what is giv-
them."

Because they do not believe in
words—words are for "typeheads,"
Chester Anderson tells them, and a
thought which needs words is just one
more of those ego trips—their only
proficient vocabulary is in the soci-
ety's platitudes. As it happens I am
till committed to the idea that the
ibility to think for oneself depends
upon one's mastery of the language,
nd I am not optimistic about chil-
dren who will settle for saying, to in-
dicate that their mother and father do
not live together, that they come from
a broken home." They are sixteen,
ifteen, fourteen years old, younger all
he time, an army of children waiting
o be given the words.

Didion later observed that "we tell
selves stories in order to live," and
think it is this larger sense of lost sto-
elling that bothered her the most
out those children. How could they
without *stories*? There are two ways
thinking about stories, after all—
weak form, favored by young chil-
n and imbeciles, a shopping list of
nts (this happened, then that hap-
ed, then the other thing happened);
l the strong form, of cause and effect,
ion and reaction (this happened *be-
se* that happened). The Creation,
ich had no cause, is the first kind of
ry. The Fall is the second kind.

The South African writer Breyten
ytenbach saw that narrative was
very basis for creating a moral or-
, that "to be aware of the moral im-
cations of narrative" is "to know
l respect the knowledge that we are
part of the same nothing." Stories
how we who wish not to worship
false idols create love and hate from the void. Without them, we become as innocent as Adam with all his ribs.

The convention, of course, was a huge hit. If the polls the following week were to be believed, the nothingness generated from within the Garden, or perhaps the innocence it inspired, was enough to turn the vote of hundreds of thousands of Americans. Bush had spoken to them on some level I'd failed to comprehend.

It wasn't until a few weeks later, when I read by chance a comment Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, had made on the third day of the convention, that I began to understand what happened. "It struck me as I was speaking to people in Bangor, Maine," Card had said, "that this President sees America as we think about a 10-year-old child. I know as a parent I would sacrifice all for my children." I had seen the convention as a "fuck you" to meaning itself, I had *felt* it that way. But the lack of meaning I had witnessed was not intended as an act of terror. It was an act of hope—perhaps even of misguided love.

One of the wonderful odd facts about Laura Bush that reporters love to trade is that her favorite passage in all of literature is "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov*. At first this might seem an odd choice, given that the inquisitor in question has promised to burn Jesus (or God, if you will) at the stake for the crime of giving man the knowledge of sin and then abandoning him to his own devices. The inquisitor saw this as a bad deal, and being a serious man he saw it as his own burden not only to remove that knowledge as best he could but also to take away the choices that such knowledge implied, for it was giving man the freedom to sin that was the worst crime of all. As he tortured Jesus, the inquisitor explained to him why his own system was far superior to that of the Father. "This is what we have done," he said. "We have improved upon Your creation and founded it instead on *miracle, mystery,* and *authority*. And men were delighted that once more they were led like sheep, and that that terrible gift which had brought them so much suffering was lifted from their hearts at last."

This is typically understood as an ironic passage that in fact celebrates free will as God's most profound and mysterious gift to humanity—Dostoevsky would have much to discuss with Didion and Breytenbach. But perhaps Bush himself had discussed all of this with his wife on some voluble night of his reckless youth and he had missed the joke. Or maybe he thought the inquisitor had a pretty good point. Either way, and although he couldn't have meant to make such an awful pun, maybe he truly is, as Joni Mitchell once sang, trying to take us back to the garden. Maybe he sees this awful "boum" as a gift to the people—a gift of existential ignorance, freely given and freely taken.

Card didn't say any of this in so many words, but then how could he? Words could as easily be subsumed by such a project as describe it. That was the genius of the convention. It wasn't the words that mattered. Madison Square Garden itself had been converted into an architect's rendering of a vast work, an engineering marvel to rival the Hoover Dam or the Tower of Babel.

It seems odd to think of a president, any president, running on a platform of existential negation, and perhaps I am being over-imaginative in my understanding of our current President's plans. Again, though, I remember that "boum," which was real enough, and I know that it could not have happened entirely by accident.

George Bush calls himself a Christian, but I think he lacks the tragic sensibility required to worship a man who would allow himself to be crucified. Bush is a doer. He wants to solve problems, and he seems to believe that at some point all of the problems can be solved, even the problem of sin. Rather than find redemption in the blood of Christ, he seems to be groping toward some way of redeeming the sin of knowledge, his own and the world's, all by himself. He sees that you are naked and ashamed, but rather than clothe you he has found the way at last—compassionately, his heart full of love—to pluck out your eye. ■

# PERMISSION

*By Kevin McIlvoy*

When Agnes and Jo and I asked if he was any good, the old man flattened his dark black hands against the oak bar top and looked down at them. A bar like U Dam Right is a place where you notice people's hands—what's on them, in them, whether they're empty. He pushed his hands further out of his golden rayon shirtsleeves and said to bring him two shot glasses. "Never mind," he said and produced them out of the blue, snapping them down on the wood.

Flawless manicure. Some kind of clear polish on his pink nails. The backs of his hands and his fingers were bare. You could see dark hair on his wrists, but his hands—he had to have shaved his hands clean to make them look like that.

Agnes and Jo poured the salt into the shot glasses the way he asked, to the brim. He said starting at age fourteen he had been a bar magician, following the Rabbit Foot Minstrels and the Florida Cotton Blossoms and Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra with Ma Rainey in the 1920s and Bessie Smith in the '30s. Permission the Magician.

"Only thing was," he said. "I'm warning you, it was all bawdy magic."

*Kevin McIlvoy is the author of four novels. His first story collection,* The Complete History of New Mexico, *will be published in January by Graywolf Press.*

We shrugged.

He said, "I'm warning you."

What did we expect? We expected nothing. Nothing. I don't know. Not for him to lick the tips of his index fingers, dip them in the salt, say, "With your permission," and rub them over our lips. Not for him to have those polished silver front teeth when he smiled.

"Is that salt?" he asked.

Agnes and Jo said, "*What?* What?" said, "Salt."

I said, "Mmm-hmm. Salt."

I heard somebody else in the room say, *Salt*. There are always new echoes inside old echoes in a bar like this. Every bar has a ghost or two.

Permission said, "Ma Rainey sang—ever heard floodwater ripping out old foundations? She sang somethin' like that. Bessie was only about seventeen years old. She didn't know nothin' you compare her to Ma Rainey about then." He upended the shot glasses, righted them, and they were still full. "Pardon me," he said, and he offered one to Agnes and one to Jo and me. "Now we put our tongues in," he said.

"Not me," said Jo.

"Warned you," he said. Behind his frown the glint disappeared.

Jo held the shot glass between her and me. She caved. She was like that, giving nothing and everything and nothing again, always swiftly and in that order. I knew. I knew.

Our tongues went in, touched And her forehead and my cheek.

Agnes and Permission put the tongues in. Agnes said, "It's sugar! She was blushing. That was no b magic since Agnes, unmarried, i her late thirties back then, was a ways giving everything and gettin nothing back, and feeling self-con scious about it. Every regular in th place knew.

Permission took the two glasse held them over his head, his sleeve dropping like gilt curtains towar his elbows. His lips glistened wit salt and sugar crystals he had no wiped away. He offered the glasse "With your permission," he said. W had to put our tongues in again. I one glass there was tequila. In on was sugar.

He didn't ask what we tasted. H scrutinized us, like we were wea drinks he'd just finished.

"Should've heard," he said. "Bessi had twice Ma's loudness but none o her real power. She could mak weather, but she couldn't change th season. When Ma showed the ban how to help Bessie shift her soun into the loudest part of her range oh, now, my Lord!"

He lifted the glasses away, didn' give me time to stop him from pour ing the sugar and tequila in on downpour onto the bar. It didn' matter. It was all salt when it hit.

Agnes said, "It—it's—" Sh

nted. She pointed so we could see mission's missing middle finger his right hand.

o had taken off her horrible glass- these thick porthole things she re. Horrible. She put them back She said, "Where did it go?"

Wadn't ever there." Permission l a cloth the same material and or of his shirt. Magicians all have loth they work magic under. He led it from his pant pocket, used hen to polish the nub where the ddle knuckle should have been. rn 'thout."

asked, "Is that why—"

I had something to prove," he said. "Yeah. It's always that simple, ain't it, Bud?"

n a bar the blinds are drawn, the ks aren't open, there is no loss



rgin. I had to ask how a person uld have made a living as a bar gician. The next Friday that he ne, he explained.

The bar goers didn't pay him for act, but they could tip him. The r provided him with food and oze. The singers and musicians ve him a nickel on every dollar at the door, put him up with them wherever they stayed.

He showed us a trick he could do with a five-dollar bill if Agnes would "let an old man get personal."

Agnes asked, "Personal?"

He said, "Mighty."

She smoothed her hands over her hips like she was measuring her own willingness. "Why not?" she said, and looked at Jo and me for the answer we couldn't give.

Permission folded up the bill with that magician flourish, like folding a bill was already magic. He said, "Picture this. Louis Armstrong is one of Ma's cornet players, and he doesn't know jack yet but he's workin' harder than all the rest. He's watchin' Joe Smith and Coleman Hawkins, who knows some shit but who's watchin' Bessie Smith, who's watchin' Ma Rainey, who's singing, 'Countin' the Blues.' Ma's big legs is apart and her big body grindin' up against somethin' good she knows like nobody else. You ever heard Trixie Smith sing, '*My man rocks me with one steady roll*'? That's Trixie—seen Ma Rainey a hundred times—Trixie imaginin' she was Ma."

He had folded the bill until it was the size of a postage stamp. He said to Agnes, "Get yourself ready, girl. Next Friday."

A week later, he held up the folded bill. "Now, Agnes, I got to put Abraham Lincoln between your knees for this," he said. Agnes and Jo wore long red velvet waitress skirts with slits up to their waists and silk black frill along the edges of the slits. Agnes said, "I got hose on," which meant something only to her. She put both hands on my head, and she grinned at me.

About a week before, Agnes and I had sat a drunk, a small, flat-headed guy, against his car, or somebody's car anyway, and we put our hands on his head to get him upright and hold him that way, but he fell over, and Agnes and I fell into each other and together we took off her glasses and we kissed, and she said, "Is that what it feels like?" and I think now she probably meant love. But how could I tell then? And I didn't ask.

Permission had her sit with her legs together on a stool next to him. It was about 1:45 in the A.M. and quiet. A bar is like a long unlighted bridge with night over it and dark water under it cooling the blackness. I said, "You want more light?"—as if a magician ever wants that.

"With your permission," he said, his hands moving from the inside of her feet upward, then his hands on the backs of her legs, smoothing her. "One night," he said, "Ma Rainey asks Louis to put a mute on. Louis ain't no good with it at all. And on the break he says, 'Aw, honey, why tie my hands behind my back?' She laughs, says, 'I like a man on a spit.' He says, all sparked, 'Why?' She says, 'You playing pretty but you ain't modulatin'.'"

Firmly, Agnes said to him, "Far enough."

Permission said, "Hold the bill tight there between your knees. You got it?"

Agnes pulled the skirt together,

with Permission's hands still under it. "Got it."

Under the skirt he moved his hands down her legs, down the front and back of her legs and over her ankles and out from under the skirt. "Louis got the technique later, but he took ahold of the idea right there: Don't play so much. You put the mute in your hand, it's remindin' you to leave things off. You play through it or around it, draw it off, clap it on, you're playin' the sound same time as you're playin' the silence."

Permission rubbed his black, hairless hands together. "Mr. Lincoln," he said to Agnes's closed skirt, "you in there?" He asked Agnes, "He in there?"

"Yep."

"You both havin' a good time?" He said, "No travelin' upstate now, Abe!" He said, "So that's how come you hear Louis Armstrong saying to his band, 'That's some modulatin'!' on his own records—that's how come. Because of what he learned from Ma Rainey."

He sang a little: *"I looked at the clock and the clock struck one. I said, 'Now, Baby, ain't we havin fun?' My man rocks me with one steady roll."* He told Agnes she could ask Abe to leave if she wanted. "Open up," he said.

"Huh?"

"'Open, open,' sez-a-me." He nodded slowly at her lap instead of drawing a wand over her, but it had the same effect.

She opened the skirt and her handsome long legs. She touched her knees, then the inside of her thighs. She closed the skirt, crossed her legs. There was no bill there, of course.

Permission sang, *"I looked at the clock and the clock struck six. I said, 'Now, Baby, I like your tricks!'"* Permission said, "Nice shoes," and nodded slowly at her red spike heels, which was all it took for her to discover the unfolded bill against her right instep. Inside her hose.

He wanted a job at U Dam Right. "You want a job here?" I asked. "Here?"

We couldn't give him a job. After hours, when the whole crew was gone, I asked Jim to look at it. Not good. A bumperless '81 Maverick with the hood missing, engine exposed, tires bald. I tried to explain how nothing was the same as in his day. Women and men didn't come to Jo Jo like this for the music or even the dancing. They'd talk right through Alberta Hunter and Billie Holiday, and they'd ignore Ma Rainey even if she and her band nearly killed them with their sound. Women and men didn't need a magician to help them lower their inhibitions either. "It's all different everywhere between women and men," I explained, as if what I believed was true for everybody.

He said, "What about you and Agnes?"

"We work together."

"Jo and you?" he asked.

I didn't answer.

"Jo and Agnes?"

"Give me a break," I said.

I didn't understand at all about women and men, that's what he was letting me know. I almost had a new college degree that I had never wanted in Business Administration and this bar-manager job to stay alive, and I had no clue. I was always offering people everything of the great nothing I knew. That's why a bar seemed like the way. The way for me to go.

Permission said, "How long we known each other, Bud?"

Before I could say six or seven hours over the past three weeks, he said, "Long time." Before I could say six or seven hours, tell him I was only twenty-three years old, before I could ask, "Are you sure you're all right?" he said, "You oughta know what I'm worth. I could be the boss card in your hand."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I can't hire you." The apology didn't take. "Permission—I'm sorry."

"Why do the men and women come here?" he asked, pretty obviously peeved at me.

I said, "They don't know. You look at them and you can see it. They don't know." But that wasn't exactly true. Like Jo and Agnes and me, people came here in order to hook up without having to know. We wanted to stay alive but not live. We wanted excuses not to be in love. A bar

like a wooden ladder

carry to a fire.

A bar is like an oar you keep your car. He returned every Frid about midnight.

He never showed us the sa trick twice.

He could talk all night. He told almost the whole story you ne hear about the blues of the Twent modulating into the swing and D Bowl folk and the bluesy gospel the Thirties and Forties while it w modulating into the jazz of t Fifties and the rockabilly and in rock and roll. He was obsessed wi Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, t Eve and Eve of the garden of Ame can music. He said they were pler more important than Charlie Patt and Son House and Robert Johns and all the guys you hear about, ev W. C. Handy.

After a year of this, I had to a "What are you after?"

"Same as you," he said.

"A buck? Free drinks?"

He said, "Well, them too." A he said, "I can show you if you lo close. You won't look close, Bud. get the girls."

It was 2:30 A.M., and Jo and Ag had changed into their street cloth Jo said, "I have to get to sleep."

"Sleep through my magic if y want," he said.

"No."

"I'll put a spell on you," he sa "It can be done."

"Okay," she said, that simply, a stayed.

Agnes, who had already sat the stool to his right, who had se what he could do without a wa and without a middle finger on right hand, pleaded, "Do the ma to me."

Jo selfishly said, "Me."

I said, "Me. Please."

A bar is a cannibal's kitchen. bar is a suicide's garden. A ma cian's one true church. He pull out the gold cloth. He snapped th shot glasses down on the bar top. an instant they were already hidd under the cloth, mouths open covered. He said, "With your p

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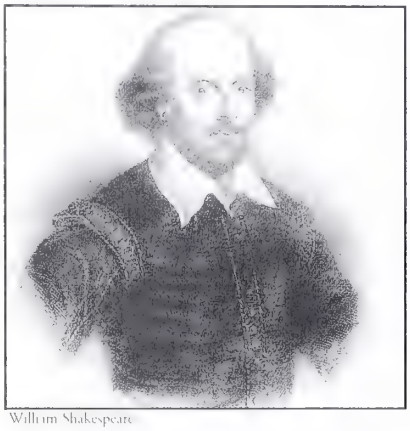
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mission," took Jo's lit cigarette, drew hard on it, gave it back. "Nice shoes," he said to Agnes. She looked at her shoes and so did we, and there was no magic there.

He laughed, exhaled smoke, said, "You so easy."

He said, "After Bessie's funeral—she got killed in a car accident, Clarksdale, Mississippi, in '37—Ma Rainey organized a street parade on Hook Road outside Philadelphia, and marched out front and tried to sing happy like they do in New Orleans so people still alive get back to livin'. She moaned the tune and you only heard her singin', *'Nobody loves you when you're down and out.'* If you heard it inside you. Louis didn't once lift the mute off his cornet. A sound like bees cryin'. Bessie's band had a guy in it that she'd taught to do her voicing when she left off singin'. He played his cornet into and out of the sadness like a new scissors cuttin' it all up into confetti. That was Ed Allen. Walkin' next to him, with his useless hands in his pockets, was Clarence Williams, who played piano sometime for Bessie."

Smoke rose out of the three covered mouths of the shot glasses on the bar. Permission told us, "Put your left hand on one—palms up—before the smoke disappears."

He sang, "*'If I ever get my hands on a dollar again, I'm gonna hold on to it till them eagles grin.'*" The little puff of smoke on the back of my hand was warmer than I thought it would be. My hand was in the middle; Agnes's was on the left; Jo's on the right.

He said, "Give your hand a kiss. Long kiss."

Jo said, "Are we having fun?" but lowered her face and roughly kissed her hand. Her hair, coarse as rug fiber, swung from her neck and hid her then. If you did not know her she would not look pretty to you. The thick glasses. That hair. If you did know her, she was too lovely to describe.

"Long kiss," Permission said.

I could see how lightly Agnes kissed herself. I could smell her powdery, chemical perfume. I could feel the decreasing heat in my hand against my lips, which were moist but drying.

Our faces were so close they were almost joined, but when we all at once

[illegible] looked up. He said, "I don't [illegible]."

He sang, "*'Yeah, I'm gonna hold on to it till them eagles grin.'*" By now, we had figured out that his storytelling was just a distraction, and his singing was the same. He told the old story about Bessie dying by bleeding to death because the white doctors in Clarksdale wouldn't treat her injured arm. He told us her headstone was stolen and, years later, a new one was paid for by "a kindly lady named Janis Joplin." He said, "I want you to kiss long, close your eyes. Close your eyes, kiss long, count ten."

He must have repeated himself or I must have repeated his words because I heard the words again in the room: *Close your eyes, kiss long, count ten.*

I closed my eyes and felt or heard Agnes close hers, which I know is impossible but I did. My hand was cooler. Janis Joplin came to mind. I wondered who paid for Janis's headstone. My lips were real dry and cool inside my palm, which was getting downright cold. I swallowed hard, heard Jo swallow the same thirsting way. The coldness in my hand, painful, really painful, reached into my whole face. Jo's hair against my forehead and cheek was cold. Agnes's cheek against my own cheek and jaw was cold. She said, "Two. Three."

Permission yanked the cloth from under our hands which were flat against the bar top—no shot glasses anywhere—and the bar top wasn't cold at all. You would think we would have lifted our faces right away, but probably a full minute passed before that happened. I think I had only counted to five. I heard Agnes say, "Eight. Nine."

"Blow," said Permission.

We blew. Smoke. Rings of smoke.

"You like that one?" Permission asked. "What do you figure it's worth?"

We were the wrong people to ask. We were. God, it makes me squirm to think how pathetic we were, saying, *Do the magic to me. Me. Me. Please.*

We secretly thought Permission doing his magic on us might change everything, like Ma Rainey's magic changed everything for everyone who listened and for Bessie and Louis and Coleman and Trixie [illegible] Ed and Clarence and for Janis [illegible] for Permission himself.

But I shouldn't speak for Jo al[illegible] what we thought. That would a[illegible] her—and then it would be just [illegible] with her. If she and I had let ourselv[illegible] if she hadn't caused her own de[illegible] nineteen years ago, we could have [illegible] en in love.

And I shouldn't speak for Ag[illegible] who has been married to me for ni[illegible] teen years and with whom I hav[illegible] beautiful daughter, Rosy. Agnes wil[illegible] me speak for her anytime, but will[illegible] ways hate me for it later. It we we[illegible] let ourselves, we could fall in love[illegible]

A joke walks into a bar with a m[illegible] A man walks into a bar with a he[illegible] stuck on a sharp stick. With a bea[illegible] ful, blindfolded swan. With a hou[illegible] pulling a hound by its leash. It sho[illegible] add up.

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# BRIEFINGS

*At Issue in the 2004 Election*

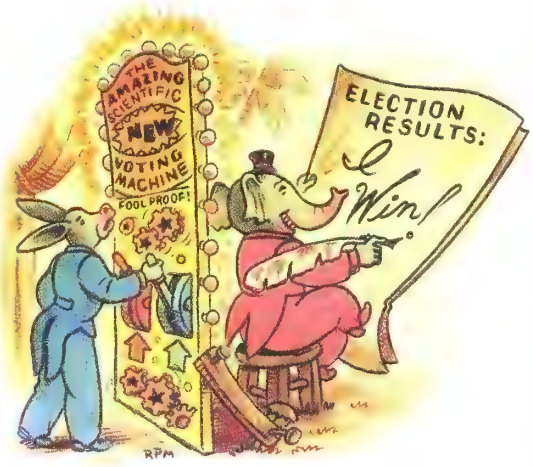
## NOTHER LORIDA

***wing failed to fix its voting oblems, Florida is poised to be orida again***

To understand the fiasco now developing in Florida, we need to revisit the 2000 model. t us begin with a lesson from ck Carlberg, the acting elecns supervisor of Duval County. "Some voters are strange," rlberg told me recently. He s attempting to explain why, in e last presidential election, 00 Duvalians trudged to the lls and, having arrived there, ted for no one for president. rlberg did concede that after ran these punch cards through e counting machines a second ne, some partly punched holes ok loose, gaining Al Gore apoximately 160 votes and Bush ghly 80.

"So, if you ran the 'blank' bals through a few more times, we'd ve a different president," I noted. rlberg, a Republican, answered with rin.

This had been true throughout the te—in certain precincts, at least. In cksonville, for example, in Duval ecincts 7 through 10, nearly one in e ballots, or 11,200 votes in all, went counted in 2000, rejected as either "under-vote" (a blank ballot) or an "over-vote" (a ballot with extra markings). In those precincts, 72 percent of the residents are African American; ballots that did make the count went four to one for Al Gore. All in all, a staggering 179,855 votes were "spoiled"—i.e., cast but not counted—in the last presidential election in Florida. Demographers from the U.S. Civil Rights Commission matched the




ballots with census statistics and estimated that 54 percent of all the under- and over-voted ballots had been cast by blacks, for whom the likelihood of having a vote discarded exceeded that of a white voter by 800 percent.

Now, four years later, Florida remains the big electoral prize. The fight card, too, is much the same. In one corner we have the first brother, Governor Jeb Bush, and his talented and inventive ballot-counting team—including his new, hand-picked secretary of state, Glenda Hood, and Theresa LePore, the Palm Beach County supervisor of elections, famed begetter of the butterfly ballot. In the Democrats' corner is political pugilist Corinne Brown, the congresswoman who in July had the rare honor of having her description of the last election, "the U.S. coup d'état," purged from the Congressional Record. Brown, along with the rest of the Congressional Black Caucus, is begging her party to preempt the vote-bending machinery that is, she fears, already at work in Florida. Behind her—far behind—is her party leadership, which instead has settled on a very Democratic response: when I asked a Democratic spokesman in Florida how his party was preparing for a new vote-count fight, he said that a "team of lawyers" was standing by for Election Day. But by then, the ballot-snatching game could already be lost, in a state where the tally is likely once again to turn on how the votes are counted rather than for whom they're cast.

Vote spoilage is, at root, a typical class problem. Just as poor and minority districts wind up with shoddy schools and shoddy hospitals, they get stuck with shoddy ballot machines. In Gadsden, the only black-majority county in Florida, one

strations by Ross MacDonald

in eight votes spoiled in 2000, the worst countywide record in the state. Next door in Leon County (Tallahassee), which used the same paper ballots, the mostly white, wealthier [illegible] almost no votes. The difference was that in mostly white Leon, each voting booth was equipped with its own optical scanner, with which voters could check their own ballots; [illegible] black county, absentee ballots received chance" equipment, any error could void a vote.

The best solution for vote spoilage, whether from blank ballots or from hanging chads, is Leon County's system: paper ballots, together with scanners in the voting booths. In fact, this is precisely what Governor Bush's own experts recommended in 2001 for the entire state. The Select Task Force on Elections Procedures, appointed by the governor to soothe public distrust after the 2000 race, chose paper ballots with scanners over the trendier option—the touch-screen computer. Although the computer rigs cost eight times as much to implement as do paper ballots with scanners, the touch screens result in many more spoiled votes. In this year's Florida presidential primary, the computers had a spoilage rate of more than 1 percent, as compared to one-tenth of a percent for the double-checked paper ballots.

Apparently some Bush boosters were not keen on a fix so inexpensive and effective. Sandra Mortham, in particular, successfully lobbied on behalf of the Florida Association of Counties to stop the state legislature from blocking the purchase of touchscreen voting systems. Mortham, coincidentally, was also a paid lobbyist for Election Systems & Software, a computer voting-machine manufacturer. Fifteen of Florida's sixty-seven counties chose the pricey computers, twelve of them ordered from ES&S, which, in turn, paid Mortham's county association a percentage on the sales.

Florida's computerization had its first mass test in 2002, in Broward County. The ES&S machines appeared to work well in some white Fort Lauderdale precincts, but in black communities, such as Lauderhill and Pompano Beach, there was wholesale disaster. Poll workers were untrained, and many polling places opened late; machines locked up or broke down. Black voters were held up in lines for hours. No one doubts that hundreds of black votes were lost before they were cast. Broward county commissioners had purhased the touch-screen machines from ES&S over the objection of elections supervisor Miriam Oliphant; notably, one commissioner's campaign treasurer was an ES&S lobbyist. Governor Bush responded to the Broward fiasco by firing Oliphant for "misfeasance."

Based on the measured differential in vote loss between paper and computer systems, the fifteen counties in Florida using touch-screen systems can expect to lose at least 29,000 votes to spoilage on Election Day—some 27,000 more than if the counties were to use paper ballots with scanners. Given the demographics of spoilage, this translates into a net lead of thousands for Bush before a single ballot is cast. The touch-screen systems, it should be noted, do not provide any paper receipts, violating a Florida law that requires manual recounts in close elections. In February, Secretary of State Glenda Hood issued a fiat declaring the fifteen touch-screen counties exempt from the law, but in August a state administrative judge attempted to block her order. As of publication, it remains unclear how the recount question will be resolved. (For more on unrecountable ballots, see "No Appeal," page 77.)

When the legacy of the 2000 "felon" purge is also taken into account, Bush's head start grows by thousands more votes. Florida law bars ex-felons from voting, but in advance of the election, the state expunged [illegible] based on a list of 94,000 [illegible], only 3 percent of which could be verified as former convicts. The list, when I obtained it in 2000, included 8,[illegible] "felons" listed as having convicted, improbably, in the [illegible]) Earlier this year, when Secretary of State Hood quietly issued a new "felon" list of 47,000 names, she at first refused my request to see it. Eventually lawsuits forced her to divulge a portion of the list, which, like its predecessor, was found to contain errors by the thousands, including more criminals of the future. Hood withdrew the new list.

But the state has yet to repair the damage caused by the prior purge. So far, Hood has ordered the restoration of only 1,000 of the 94,000 Floridians purged using the original lists, and those only under pressure of court orders. Tens of thousands remain purged; for example, Willie Steen, a Gulf War veteran whose right to vote was stripped after he was apparently matched to a convict named William O'Steen. The state agrees that Steen is innocent, yet it has not required local officials to reinstate him. Those who attempt to get back their votes have been required, depending on the county, to seek clemency from Jeb Bush for crimes committed by others or to provide fingerprints for investigation, or to undergo ad-hoc court-like proceedings to prove they are themselves and not some convict with a similar name.

For readers who think that Florida's ballot machinations seem criminal, there is now some official corroboration. On July 15, Chris Edley, a member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, said the evidence concerning Florida's lists of so-called felons suggested "the possibility of criminal violations" of federal law; Edley, who is also the dean of the University of California Law School at Berkeley, convinced his fellow commissioners to open an investigation into whether Florida's highest officials "engineered" the racially skewed purge. But the CRC cannot conduct its own criminal inquiry, and instead must pass on a request to the U.S. Justice Department.

As of publication, Attorney General John Ashcroft has not responded to the CRC's request. The commissioners, I am told, do not expect Mr. Ashcroft to read Governor Bush his rights anytime soon.

—*Greg Palast*

## ) APPEAL

***h a third of the votes countable, another Florida d happen anywhere***

o steal elections is human nature. In 1948 a U.S. Senate seat was stolen, by simple ballot-stuffing, for Lyndon Johnson; without it he would never have reached presidency. John Kennedy only the presidency in 1960 with the ort of dead voters in Chicago. But we approach a national election is susceptible to theft in its very hinery—not just in Florida but al- anywhere.

oughly three out of every ten of ballots cast by voters on November ll vanish into direct-recording-tronic (DRE) computers the mo- t they are cast. These votes cannot ecounted independently of the puters because there will be no r-marked ballots to recount. The ption is Nevada, where the obvi- solution, a printer, will produce ied paper ballots. In at least twen- ve other states, the votes cast on computers will be unrecountable, ning that programmers will know work cannot be checked against evidence created by voters.

lthough complex safeguards against and fraud in computer-voting sys- do exist, they are, most comput- cientists agree, overwhelmingly lequate. Computers can be pro- med to steal elections and then all evidence of the theft. The re- lity of the totals spat out by the systems is dependent on the va- y of their internal audit trails and lot images," which can be rigged. ie computerized voting systems, as those that scan punchcard or k-sense ballots, at least have voter- ced paper ballots that can be re- ated. But to "recount" the 35 mil- or so votes in DRE jurisdictions, ials will simply command the com- rs to regurgitate second printouts ie same results, which, in point of are not recounts at all.

specially troubling is the fact that the vote-counting process is now dominated by private corporations, whose machines (which include not just DREs but paper-ballot scanners) will count five out of six of all votes. Of the top five companies in the field—Election Systems and Software (ES&S) of Nebraska, Diebold Election Systems of Texas, Sequoia Voting Systems of California, Hart InterCivic of Texas, and Danaher Corporation of Illinois—at least two have strong partisan ties. ES&S, which will oversee the counting of more than half of all the votes, is part-owned by an investment firm whose CEO, Michael McCarthy, is a frequent contributor to Republican causes. Another 8 to 9 million votes will be tabulated in computers provided by Diebold, whose CEO, Walden O'Dell, caused a scandal by declaring he would help deliver his home state, Ohio, to George W. Bush.

Of the 110 million votes that will likely be cast this year in the most important election on the globe, 35 million will be unrecountable. Far from preventing another debacle like 2000, the DRE machines make one all the more likely. If either side asks for a recount in decisive counties but gets, instead, only second computer printouts, the 2004 election, too, may end in rancor, recriminations, and another four years of dubious legitimacy.

Where are the weakest points? Thirteen cities of more than half a million residents will cast their votes in ballotless DREs: Houston, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Antonio, San Jose, Columbus, Austin, Baltimore, Memphis, the District of Columbia, Nashville, Charlotte, N.C., and El Paso. So will four large urbanized counties in California and another four in Florida: Hillsborough on the Gulf and the tier of three counties on the Atlantic—Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade—whose crabwise gyrations mesmerized the country during the 2000 recount. Ninety-two U.S. counties with more than 100,000 registered voters will use DRE systems, accounting for 22 million votes in all. This includes counties in ten "swing" states—Colorado, Delaware, Florida, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia, and Louisiana—that will record a total of 9 million votes on DREs, from 200,000 in New Mexico up to 3.5 million in Florida. In a close race any of these states could undermine the winner's legitimacy; a few in particular are worth mentioning.

*Pennsylvania*

Five large counties in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Montgomery, Dauphin, Berks, and Beaver) will use unrecountable ballots, representing a quarter of the state's votes overall. I asked Ed Schulgen—the deputy in the Philadelphia city commissioner's office, which oversees elections—what he would do in the event of a recount. "We'd reinsert all the computer chips back into the main reader," he said, "and print out the results." What result would he expect? "The same one that we got before."

In a recount, according to Steven G. Chiavetta, the director of elections in Dauphin, another DRE county in this crucial state, "What's in those [computer] cartridges is never gonna change. You can run 'em over, and over, and over, and over, and it'll be the same." And how does Chiavetta know there are no election-stealing algorithms in his voting machines? "I know 'cause I *program* 'em, I do it myself!" he exclaimed.

Complicating matters in Pennsylvania is the fact that statewide recounts are exceedingly difficult to obtain there. To get one, a candidate must obtain notarized statements from three registered voters in each of the roughly 9,400 precincts, all in the span of *five days*. Moreover, the candidate must deposit at least $50 for every precinct; i.e., nearly half a million dollars, which is forfeited if neither fraud nor "substantial error" is found.

*North Carolina*

Almost a third of the voters of North Carolina live in the state's four large DRE counties. Guilford County (Greensboro) was, according to George Gilbert, its director of elections, the first jurisdiction in the nation to use a

touch-screen voting system, in 1988, and he claims that since then the county has "lost only four votes." Although he does the local programming of the machines himself, he says that he does not even have a copy of the source code, the central set of instructions that controls the vote counting, which is supplied by ES&S. "You don't test a system by looking at the source code," he told me. "The program itself can be examined without ever looking at the source code with test-voting, simulating election conditions."

Mecklenburg County, which includes the city of Charlotte, uses a DRE system from MicroVote of Indiana. "Hey, I don't know any of that," the county's director of elections, Michael G. Dickerson, told me when I asked him about his computer security. "I watch it, how it works." He dismissed concerns about vote stealing. "I'm worried whether my car starts . . . lots of things you worry about."

*Ohio*

In Ohio five counties with more than 100,000 voters each have been using DREs for years. This year the secretary of state, Ken Blackwell, a Republican, allowed more than thirty counties to consider new systems, but only if their proposed manufacturers met Ohio's new security standards. According to Blackwell's spokesman, Diebold, ES&S, and Hart InterCivic all failed to bring their DREs up to the standards. Consequently, of the eighty-eight counties in Ohio, sixty-eight, or about 70 percent of the state's voters, will still be using the unreliable punch-card ballots on November 2. Furthermore, in a close election—and Ohio is expected to be close indeed—any of the DRE counties could swing the state one way or another.

Sequoia provides the software for the AVC Advantage DRE machines used for elections in Ohio's Lake County. Linda Hlebak, the deputy director of elections, says that to do a recount without having paper ballots, "We will reset the tabulator to zero and reread all those cartridges. At the warehouse we reproduce those election reports that appeared election night."

So it goes state to state. Ray Barrett, the administrator of elections in Nashville, told me a story about an old gentleman who, ten years ago, lost an election by 30,000 votes. The man couldn't believe it, so they ran the cartridges through again to satisfy him. That was a second printout? "Right," Barrett said. Was that a recount? "I don't know if it's a recount or not," he said. "Anyhow we didn't get sued over it."

If, after this election, though, a demand for a recount in any decisive state is thwarted by its unrecountable votes, the nation could face a calamity far worse than a civil suit. Should voters come to understand that no record independent of the computers exists for nearly a third of the nation's votes, the damage to the declared winner—and to the political system as a whole, perhaps to the democracy itself—would be staggering.

I asked the elections administrator in Knoxville, a fellow named Greg Mackay, what he would do if there were a close election this year. "Shit, I'd go home and get drunk!" he said. "No, we could run the cartridges through again."

"'Course," he added, "you'd get the same result. . . . It'd be the same damn thing."

*—Ronnie Dugger*

## THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTS

***Attempts this year to suppress the black vote would not be the first***

In August 2003 the *American Spectator*, the conservative magazine that broke the Paula Jones sex scandal, printed a quote from Roger Stone, a Watergate figure and veteran G.O.P. political operative. He proposed that if Al Sharpton were to run against Hillary Clinton in the 2006 Senate race, she'd be "sunk." Surely the black electorate of New York would split its vote and deliver the election to a Republican. Not long afterward, it was revealed that for an entire year Stone, who had helped orchestrate the mob shutdown of the 2000 Dade Co[unty] recount and who has worked on e[very] Republican presidential campaign si[nce] 1972, was covertly financing, as we[ll] stage-managing, Sharpton's run for [the] presidency. He had helped script [the] preacher's attacks on Howard De[an] lack of black appointees and on [the] Democratic establishment's neglec[t of] minorities. According to a witn[ess] Stone told Sharpton he was motiv[ated] to help his campaign because the [two] men shared "a mutual obsession: [they] both hate the Democratic Party." B[y] appearances, the collaboration was [the] latest episode in a venerable tradit[ion] of racial politics: manipulating [the] black vote.

The mid-century racial realignm[ent] in American politics made black v[oot]ers an irresistible target. Whereas [in] 1956 nearly 40 percent of black vo[ters] cast their ballot for Dwight Eisenh[ow]er, by the 1960s they were a nearly [so]id Democratic bloc. Since then, gett[ing] black voters to the polls has bee[n the] sure way to increase Democratic v[ote] totals; keeping them home, by a[ny] means necessary, can only help [the] publicans. On election night 19[68] Lyndon Johnson telephoned Hub[ert] Humphrey to brief him on the Rep[ub]licans' latest tactic. "Oh, Hubert, I w[ish] you'd see what these sons of bitc[hes] have done," LBJ sighed, in a conv[er]sation recently unearthed by Rob[ert] David Johnson, a professor at Brook[lyn] College, for a forthcoming book [on] Johnson transcripts. "They've got [an] an instruction from the 'Negro P[ro]tective League' that says that any [Ne]gro that goes [and] votes —that the [Ne]tective League just wants to info[rm] him, as their friend, that if he'd e[ver] had a traffic ticket, if he'd ever been [un]der suspicion, if he'd ever been spe[edi]ng, if he'd ever had a parking ticke[t] he'd ever hadn't paid his taxes on ti[me] if he'd ever been discharged from e[m]ployment, that he'll have to report ri[ght] away to the sheriff, and that th[ese] things will have to be settled before [he] can clear his record to vote. And th[ey] put those out in all Southern cities [in] just the meanest, dirtiest, low-do[wn] stuff that I ever heard."

That the Goldwater forces had

ed to such measures surprised no . Two years earlier, William nquist, then a notable in Gold-er's Arizona Republican Party er chief justice of the Supreme rt) supervised an operation in h local G.O.P. officials dressed in police-like uniforms and ed black voters, insisting they the U.S. Constitution out loud re casting their ballot. In 1986, a ublican scheme targeting black rs in a Louisiana Senate race was osed just before the election n incriminating documents




ed up in federal court. "I know race is really important to you," G.O.P.'s midwestern director e to his counterpart in the h, according to the *Washington* "I would guess that this pro- will eliminate at least 0,000 folks from the rolls. . . . If is a close race . . . which I'm as- ng it is, this could keep the vote down considerably."

is tactic, sometimes called "bal- nforcement," is still very much us. Just before Election Day 2002, went up in black neighborhoods ltimore advising residents not to until they had taken care of their ng tickets, overdue rent, "AND ST IMPORTANT ANY WAR- TS." The flyers also included a lly reminder to "come out to vote ov. 6th." (The election was Nov. 5.) As usual, the Republicans denied authorship.

In the closely fought 2003 Kentucky governor's race, Mike Czerwonka, a state G.O.P. activist, was caught advertising a meeting to discuss how to deal with the problem of rampant minority voting. The flyers he sent out warned that recent elections had been "adversely impacted" by civil-rights groups "and their efforts to marshal the Get Out To Vote efforts targeted toward the black, poor voters in selected communities." The meeting, held at the offices of the local builders' and contractors' trade association, yielded a plan to dispatch Republican poll watchers to challenge voter eligibility at fifty-nine predominantly black precincts.

It is an electoral truism that any policy that makes it harder to vote will tend to depress black turnout more than white turnout. A 1994 Justice Department study in Louisiana found that blacks are four to five times less likely to carry a photo I.D. than whites. Accordingly, Republicans have been perennial champions of anti–"vote fraud" campaigns. In 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft announced a new Voting Integrity Initiative. Its very first investigation happened to target heavily Democrat-leaning Native-American reservation-dwellers in South Dakota, where a neck-and-neck Senate battle that year had prompted Democrats to pour resources into voter registration. In a campaign spearheaded by the state's Republican attorney general, 2,000 Native-American voters were questioned by state and federal agents, yielding a total of one individual who was charged with violating voting rules. And just this August, in the wake of a Democratic upset victory in the 2003 mayoral election in traditionally Republican Orlando, Florida's Department of Law Enforcement launched a ballot-fraud investigation that sent state troopers to the homes of dozens of black voters—despite the department's own finding that "there was no basis to support the allegations of election fraud."

But in the era of compassionate conservatism, subtler methods of voter suppression have also surfaced. Some Republican consultants have opted for a different strategy: repelling blacks from the Democrats. "Baby, there are some real ugly Democrats that have hurt black people and not helped us at all," a black grandmother warned her granddaughter in one 2002 G.O.P. ad played on black radio stations in Missouri. "We have to be smart and make decisions based on what is really right. Not just 'cause somebody told us we owe them our vote." On Election Day 2002, the Louisiana G.O.P., facing a cliffhanger Senate race against Democrat Mary Landrieu, paid black youths $75 a day to hold up signs in black neighborhoods saying, "Mary, if you don't respect us, don't expect us." And in Kansas, Republican ads on black stations called Social Security a form of "reverse reparations" in which black workers subsidize white retirees.

One reason racial politics persist at the voting booth is that there seem to be few consequences for the perpetrators. After Christine Whitman's 1993 gubernatorial victory in New Jersey, her campaign manager, Ed Rollins, made the faux pas of bragging to reporters that he had spent as much as $500,000 in "walking-around money" to bribe black ministers not to encourage their congregations to turn out on Election Day. "I think to a certain extent we suppressed their vote," he said, "suppressed it in a very positive way." After the outcry that ensued, and presumably upon deeper reflection, Rollins claimed he had made up the whole story, and a Justice Department investigation couldn't find any evidence that the bribes had taken place. At the time, the *Washington Post* called it "one of the most self-destructive acts in the history of political consulting." But today Rollins, like William Rehnquist, is a pillar of the political community—chief adviser to a Republican Senate campaign and a frequent commentator on Fox News.

—*Seth Ackerman*

# THE LIBYA FALLACY

***The Iraq war is not what disarmed Qaddafi***

Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's announcement last December that Libya would disclose its banned-weapons programs, including its efforts to develop nuclear arms, came at an extremely propitious time for President Bush. The President's war in Iraq was already foundering, and his prewar justifications were facing greater scrutiny at home. In the absence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, however, Libya's renunciation seemed to give the White House a retroactive rationale for toppling the Baathist regime. The administration immediately credited Libya's capitulation not merely to nine months of back-room negotiations but to one very threatening demonstration of force—the Iraq war. In delivering the news of Libya's reforms on December 19, Bush cast Qaddafi's decision in the stark language of cause and effect: "Our understanding with Libya came about through quiet diplomacy. It is the result, however, of policies and principles declared to all. . . . In word and action, we have clarified the choices left to potential adversaries."

Since that statement, Bush and members of his administration have invoked Libya on more than two hundred separate occasions. At this summer's Republican convention, Vice President Dick Cheney said Libyan disarmament was confirmation that the world knows "President Bush does not deal in empty threats and halfway measures." Secretary of State Colin Powell said of Qaddafi's motives, "I'm sure [the Iraq war] played a role, a significant role in his mind." Suddenly, the war in Iraq had been transformed into the cornerstone of a doctrine of military intimidation, in which Syria, Iran, and other rogue states would become compliant—as Libya supposedly had—because they feared America's sword.

But just as the initial justifications for war with Iraq had proved hollow, so too did this post-invasion rationale. Bush is taking full credit for negotiations that in fact spanned decades, and Qaddafi was impelled not by the recent Iraq war but by the destructive effects years of multilateral sanctions and international isolation have had on his country's prosperity and his own prestige. As with other claims made by the Bush Administration, the assertions that its diplomatic and martial maneuvers had pushed Libya away from "weapons of mass murder" and "out of the terrorism business" are belied by the facts.

During the 1980s, Colonel Qaddafi was the self-styled patriarch of international terrorism. Motivated by a hazy pan-Arabism, the man President Ronald Reagan called "the mad dog of the Middle East" provided support and sanctuary to militant groups as diverse as the I.R.A. and Palestine's Abu Nidal. Libya itself engineered some of the decade's worst terrorist attacks, including an explosion at a West Berlin nightclub in 1986, which killed three and injured hundreds; the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed all 259 on board and 11 on the ground; and the downing of a French UTA plane over Niger in 1989, which killed 170. After Libya refused to surrender the two primary suspects in the Lockerbie bombing, the U.N. imposed sanctions on the country that, when coupled with extensive U.S. and British sanctions already in place, further isolated Libya and crippled its oil industry. Under sanctions, Libya lost an estimated $30 billion—comparable to its entire 2003 GDP—and suffered from drastic inflation, unemployment of up to 40 percent, and increasing domestic instability (since 1993, Qaddafi is believed to have survived at least two coup attempts and several failed assassinations). In addition, a change in U.S. law allowed the families of the Lockerbie victims to bring a civil suit against Libya, applying greater pressure to the North African nation. For Libya to reenter the international community and stabilize its financial system, it became clear that it would have to answer for Lockerbie.

Bush would have us believe that Qaddafi, upon witnessing the fate of Saddam Hussein, came suddenly to heel. But Libya had been attempting to cast off its pariah status since the first Bush Administration. As early as 1992, according to a January account from former senator Gary Hart in the *Washington Post*, Libya was trying, albeit unsuccessfully, to get into America's good graces and had expressed a willingness to surrender the suspects in the Lockerbie bombing. Libya handed over the two suspects in 1999—the same year it paid restitutions for the bombing of the UTA airliner over Niger and for the 1984 killing of a British policewoman at the Libyan Embassy in London—and the U.N. suspended its sanctions. To end U.S. sanctions—which hinged on Libya's forsaking terrorism and weapons of mass destruction—Qaddafi made overtures throughout the Clinton years. Martin Indyk, assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs from 1997 to 2000, told me that Qaddafi clearly was seeking a positive relationship with the United States and was willing to do almost anything to achieve it. "We were the ones who held it up, not him. We weren't in a hurry to get in bed with him; we needed to test him to see if he was serious. He has suicidist tendencies." Indyk says that at a meeting in Geneva in 1999 Libya offered to cut terrorist ties and to fully expose its weapons programs. Writing in the *Financial Times*, Indyk explained that responsibilities to the Lockerbie families were a higher priority at the time since Libya's nuclear program "barely existed" and its chemical weapons were "not considered an imminent threat." (State Department testimony from February 2004 indicat

many of Libya's nuclear compo-
ts were "still in their original
caging containers.")
n its haste to claim Libya as a tri-
ph, the administration has treat-
Qaddafi as if he has undergone a
uine reformation, when in fact
may not be the case. In April
United States repealed virtually
anctions against Libya, something
h had announced would occur
y when Qaddafi's government
nonstrated "definitive action to
st in the fight against interna-
nal terrorism." But by June the
ion that past administrations had
cised when dealing with Qaddafi
ved warranted: several newspa-
reported that Libya was behind
ossible plot to assassinate Saudi
bia's Crown Prince Abdullah. A
uralized U.S. citizen named Ab-
ahman Alamoudi—the founder
ne American Muslim Council as
as the driving force behind the
allation of Muslim chaplains in
U.S. military—and a Libyan in-
gence officer were being held as
spirators in the plot; Alamoudi
kly fingered Qaddafi as its spon-
On July 30, when Alamoudi
ded guilty to trade, tax, and im-
ration violations, Attorney Gen-
Ashcroft called the conviction a
lestone" and described Alamoudi
a major player in the financial
port of terrorism." The White
se, undeterred by these develop-
nts, has continued its rush to nor-
ize relations with Tripoli: in Sep-
ber it rescinded remaining
nomic restrictions, permitting di-
travel between the two coun-
s and freeing up U.S. access to
ya's substantial oil reserves.

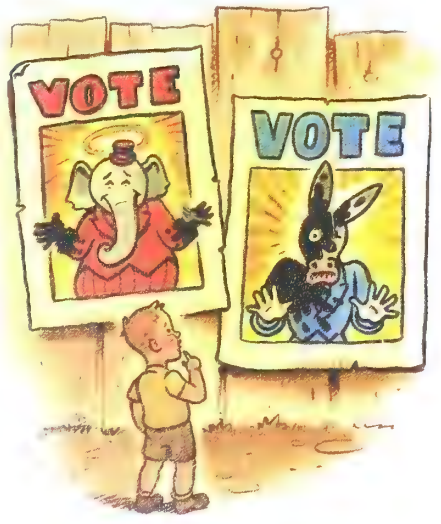
When Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry dared suggest of Libya's re-
ciation, "We could've had that
some time ago," Colin Powell re-
nded with disdain: "That's absurd.
n't know what Senator Kerry is
ing about." President Bush also
dismissed such claims and instead
spent the past ten months touting
t he contends is his administration's effective marriage of force and diplomacy. But if, as Bush and his cohorts suggest, the invasion of Iraq was intended as a lesson to other rogue states, then its pedagogical value is dubious at best. With most of the United States military tied up in the one Axis of Evil country that has proven *not* to have weapons of mass destruction, Iran and North Korea have brazenly advanced their nuclear programs. And as Martin Indyk has concluded, "The record shows [that] Libyan disarmament did not require a war in Iraq." Indeed, Qaddafi's longstanding efforts to reconcile with the West demonstrate, at least in part, that sanctions and other international pressures can be effective deterrents as well as a viable alternative to war.

*—David Gargill*

## OUR FRIEND THE SMEAR

***Notes on the origin of specious***

However much we might prefer our elections to be decided on the issues, victory on November 2 will almost certainly belong to the side that propagates the most effective smear. For this reason, it is worthwhile to develop our understanding of the smear and of its peculiar niche in our political ecosystem. What is it that allows the smear to thrive? What are its haunts and its habits? To answer these questions, let us examine the life cycle of a particularly robust smear—the ad campaign of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth—within the confines of a single TV network (ABC).




As we will see, the life cycle of a smear has four distinct phases.

*1. Gestation*

In order to survive in the twenty-four-hour news cycle, the smear must develop two defenses or else perish. The first is that it *seem new*, and in this it enjoys a natural advantage over the truths with which it must compete. Most truths about a presidential candidate have been reported to the point that they seem, to reporters and editors, like commonplaces; a story that "everybody knows" is in danger of being left behind as reporters "move on."

The second defense is that the smear *seem solid*, and this is merely a question of time. With luck (or careful planning) the smear will soon develop a defensive layer of fact—for example, when a candidate makes a preemptive denial, which the media can immediately report, along with the smear itself. In the case of the Swift Boat smear, its benefactors supplied its factual shell by taking out ads, a legitimate news event. And thus, on or around August 5, was a smear born. From the next day's *Good Morning America*:

> DIANE SAWYER: Well, this morning, we're turning now to a new hot potato being passed around on the campaign trail. A group of Vietnam veterans is casting a shadow on John Kerry's war record, and ABC's Jake Tapper has a report on all this from Washington. Jake?
>
> JAKE TAPPER: Good morning, Diane. Well, these anti-Kerry Vietnam veterans have launched a very controversial new ad in a few key battleground states, slamming John Kerry's record as a soldier.

2 *Controversy as story*

Once a smear has been accepted into the news stream, journalists can simply report on the *dispute*; e.g., the ad was a "hot potato," "very controversial." This approach allows the smear to grow quickly: if the story is the controversy, then reporters must adopt a mechanical evenhandedness, by which lies and truth are granted equal time. Thus ABC's next major treatment of the Swift Boat story, August 9 on *Nightline*, began with a series of clips juxtaposing the Swift Boat ads with the words of Kerry supporters. The voiceover from ABC anchor Michel Martin: "John Kerry, the decorated war hero . . . Or John Kerry, war fraud?" In his introductory remarks, Martin elaborated:

> [A]lmost thirty years after the war ended, many people cannot even agree on the facts. Especially when those facts become part of the political battlefield. John Kerry has been campaigning with his comrades from Vietnam, to make the case that he is ready to be commander in chief. And now an opposing group of veterans has challenged him and his record. Here's ABC's Jake Tapper.

Only after another sustained barrage of disagreeing vets (four anti-Kerry, two pro-) did Tapper upset the magnificent equipoise with this:

> The Kerry campaign calls the charges wrong, offensive, and politically motivated, and points to naval records that seemingly contradict the charges. Adding to the murkiness about these many accusations is the fact that when Kerry faced similar questions about his Silver Star during his 1996 Senate race, two of the swift boat veterans opposing him now defended him then.

Later, Tapper informed viewers that funding for the Swift Boat ads had been provided by a Republican donor with close ties to Karl Rove. In the sophisticated wordplay of the controversy-as-story, this fact, as with the naval records and the rest, was taken not to exonerate the accused but to further add to the "murkiness."

3 *Story as smear*

When a smear has survived a few weeks, it can begin to subsist *as the basis for itself*. The classic indication that a smear has reached this stage is when a candidate is "dogged by a story that will not go away." When *Nightline* rejoined the Swift Boat story on August 19, anchor Chris Bury in fact marked the transition with just those words. After rehashing the ad and the controversy, he then dove into a lengthy meta-analysis:

> So how did one TV ad, which appeared in only three states, become a national story that would not go away? More on that when we come back.

During this later stage, repetition replaces controversy in nourishing the smear. In the three weeks leading up to the Republican Convention, portions of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ad—with its short, repetitive statements such as "John Kerry is no war hero," "John Kerry has not been honest about what happened in Vietnam," "John Kerry lied to get his Bronze Star"—were replayed on twenty-six different network and cable news programs, not even counting those on Fox News.

4 *Story as story line*

With ubiquity, the smear has reached its final, mature state. The Swift Boat story indeed will dog Kerry for the remainder of the campaign, no matter how thoroughly and frequently it is discredited. It now *resonates*, in the sense that Ted Koppel used the word on September 1, in the following exchange on *Nightline* with comedian Jon Stewart:

> KOPPEL: The problem, Jon, is—and here is where I think the Republicans have got John Kerry dead to rights . . . when he came out there and said "John Kerry, reporting for duty," when he has made every public appearance in recent memory in the presence of his band of brothers, when there is not a public appearance that doesn't in some way reflect on the Vietnam experience, then the Vietnam experience becomes central.
>
> STEWART: Absolutely relevant, but that doesn't make the lies true.
>
> KOPPEL: No. But it makes them p[ar]ticularly resonant.

Why, in the end, do some sme[ars] "resonate" while others falter? The [answ]er, quite simply, is that success[ful] smears travel in herds. The Swift B[oat] smear now makes its lair within a v[ast] and welcoming habitat of Republic[an] smears, which together provide [the] permanent media talking points [on] "why some people oppose Kerry": [he's] untrustworthy flip-flopper, weak on t[er]rorism, may have lied about his med[als]. Political strategists praise the Repu[bli]cans for their "message discipline," a[nd] this is especially earned with resp[ect] to their smears, to the unwavering s[tor]y *line* by which they have malig[ned] John Kerry. Whereas smears from the left have been equally vigorous, a[nd] brood they are far less harmonious. Bush is portrayed one day as a net[ur]ous genius, the next as a dimwit p[up]pet; one day as an upper-crust p[lu]tocrat, the next as a pious yokel. T[he] right, by contrast, displays an inte[gr]ity of character assassination. Ker[ry's] greatest enemy on Election Day w[ill] not be President Bush but his pack[ed] smears, which will be nothing if [not] exceptionally well bred.

—*Bill W[asik]*

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*Greg Palast's film* Bush Family F[un]tunes: The Best Democracy Mo[ney] Can Buy *recently was released on D[VD] in the United States. His last article* [for] Harper's Magazine, *"Resolved to r[un] in," appeared in the March 2003 issu[e].*

*Ronnie Dugger is the founding editor of* [the] Texas Observer *and the author of* [two] *ographies of Lyndon Johnson and Ron[ald] Reagan, among other books.*

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*David Gargill is a researcher at* [*Ha*]*magazine.*

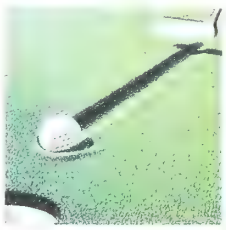
*Bill Wasik is a senior editor of* Harp[er's] Magazine. *His last article for* [the] *magazine, "Dismal Beat," appeared* [in] *the March 2003 issue.*

# EW BOOKS

*y John Leonard*



ather late in John Updike's twenty-first novel, VILLAGES (Knopf, $25), Vanessa Slade to Owen Mackenzie, "You're such ppy." This is after a discussion of reesome, which will turn out to be ıful thinking on Owen's part. But ı wishful thinking is Owen's soft- . From an only childhood in Wil- Pennsylvania, to college days at , where he meets his first wife, llis, to married life, computer pro- ıming, and serial adultery in Mid- Falls, Connecticut, in the swing- Sixties and sorehead Seventies, ivorce, remarriage, selling out be- the tech-stock bust, and cashing retire with Julia to well-heeled ısion in Haskells Crossing, Mass- achusetts, Owen—"afraid of the water, of heights, of spiders, of the dark"—has always hoped that his life was charmed. The easy women in that life have forgiven him almost anything. And even God does him the favor of killing someone inconvenient.



Updike will be harder on him, though not as hard as he was on Rabbit. (I miss Rabbit, don't you? Tired meat and moist cheese, he exploded from too much consumption of hydrocarbons, carbohydrates, cheap sensations, and disposable ideas. I see him in my mirror.) It's not only that Owen's three villages—four, if you count "self-cherishing" Cambridge—can't have taught him all that much if on page 296, still wondering why women ever agree to sex, he says: "Perhaps it was a simple question of electrical engineering: in a world full of plugs, nature must provide sockets." It's also that the abyss is wide open, just waiting for him, like "the realm of irrevocable real harm." Everybody dies, even puppies. Meanwhile, Updike will whittle his usual brilliant scrimshaw. *Villages* is yet another of his anthropologies of Northeast seaboard mating dysfunction and existential dread—not as wonderful as *Couples*, not as woebegone as *Marry Me*, and you may prefer him off on a toot in Africa or Brazil. But nobody does it better. Nor, at age seventy-two, is he about to change his spores.

Who else would reference horseshoes on asphalt, elaborate a psychology and a phrenology of golf swings, and notice the "thoroughbred ankles" of the hereditary rich? Who else would plot a man's trajectory by the games he learns to play, from box hockey and kick-the-can to bridge and cunnilingus? Updike is, besides, a kind of Weather Channel, reporting here on over half a century of price controls, police actions, staple guns, Muhammad Ali, the Gulf of Tonkin, Nixon and Kissinger, Chappaquiddick, yuppie joggers, child-abusing priests, Enron corporate skulduggerers, and both father and son invasions of Iraq. And by making Owen a writer of code, Updike lets himself munch on and ruminate whole new pastures of language, from propositional calculus, advanced topology, and invariant Betti groups to Turing tests, Markov chains, and random variables. "In that dusk before Apple dawned" (before, that is, a pixel-specific pinpointing mouse), an Owen speaking only COBOL and FORTRAN invents DigitEyes by drawing on a computer screen with a light pen.

We may be sure the pen is phallic. There is a lot of sex, most of it furry and moist, some of it risible: pink heels,

*l Project, Bedroom, Scene #1*, by Eric Fischl/courtesy Boone Gallery, New York City.
*r So Far*, by René Boin/Private Collection/Wingfield Sporting Gallery, London/Bridgeman Art Library

glassy globes, pumpkin seeds, silky kites, fleecy lambs, [illegible] crests, musky bins, lava folds, [illegible] blood-thump, and "dear little nipples like rabbit noses." After which [illegible] informs us: "Men understand men, mechanisms with very few levers—a few earthy appetites, an atavistic warrior pride and [illegible]. Women are shining moon-creatures, who hurt us when they withhold themselves, and again when they don't." This is all very Fifties and rather sweet. As Colonel Hakim Felix Ellellou observed in *The Coup*: "I perceived that a man, in America, is a failed boy." He could have been talking about Owen or Rabbit Angstrom or Piet Hanemas or Henry Bech or Darryl Van Horne—or even, dare we say, John Updike.

Adultery is likewise the lodestar toward which the compass needle points in most of the novels of another failed boy, Graham Greene—away from God, as it were, though it sometimes seemed that it was God who had washed His hands and turned His powdered face away from Greene. Thirteen years after the novelist's death, Norman Sherry has at last delivered the concluding chunk of his authorized biography, [illegible] (Viking, $39.95). And after almost three decades of stalking, it is too much too soon, as if Sherry had to heave it out of his system or choke on everything he knew. So up it comes, undigested: Mexico City, Broadway, Paris, Stockholm, Moscow, Saigon, Havana, Jerusalem, the Belgian Congo, and Capri; Kim Philby, Evelyn Waugh, Edith Sitwell, Charlie Chaplin, Noel Coward, and Moshe Dayan; blue ink, MI6, opium, and Unamuno; not one, but two, married mistresses, even as Greene himself remained wedded forever to yet a third woman; borders, brothels, booze, and leukemia.



We now have over 2,000 pages of Sherry and are none the wiser for all the quotes from all the letters. As evasive as Greene's own two memoirs were, *A Sort of Life* and *Ways of Escape* were also as elegant as spycraft. Sherry flounders in the lurid and superfluous. His idea of literary criticism is to visit the scene of a book, inflict himself upon its crawl space, attach a neon adjective or two, and point to people who might have been models for Greene's characters. Why not analyze the similarities and differences with his sainted Joseph Conrad? Why not go on to look at Greene's literary stepchildren, the Joan Didions, Robert Stones, and Norman Rushes? At least wonder whether there was an early confusion of Eros and Grace. Who needs a biographer who can't stop obtruding on his own narrative? Who is importunate, pettifogging, prevaricated to, and put-upon? Who insists on quoting his lame self in the epigraphs to his chapter headings, among proverbs, nursery rhymes, and senseless pluckings from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Rudyard Kipling, Walter Pater, Bulwer Lytton, Emily Dickinson, John Donne, Emile Zola, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, Cervantes, Napoleon, Winston Churchill, Nikita Khrushchev, and George Harrison, the late Beatle?

Even the dreams are less interesting in Volume III than they were in Volume I, maybe because a younger Greene did his best to oblige his Jungian psychoanalyst and thus reported empty cupboards, puffy witches, slashed throats, old women with ringworm, murderous Chinese agents, a Princess of Time with a deathly touch, and the justifiable homicide of J. B. Priestley. Would a Freudian analyst have made him a happier person? How much does an unhappy childhood help or hurt a writer? Can we name any important writers who didn't have an unhappy childhood, except John Updike and Vladimir Nabokov?

If God indeed left the house, then Arkady Renko may be what has become of the Graham Greene hero—our man in Moscow before and after the fall of Communism, making up honor and honesty as he goes along, negotiating new species of corruption. In Martin C[illegible] Smith's first Arkady Renko nov[illegible] *Gorky Park* (1981), we had a terr[illegible] time learning all about Mosc[illegible] cops, how the KGB messed w[illegible] them, the feeding, drinking, and [illegible] tomotive habits of a not-so-classl[illegible] Soviet society, plus mink farmi[illegible] When Renko returned in *Polar S*[illegible] (1989), he was even better: a "pol[illegible] cal unreliable" punished for abett[illegible] a defection to the West; a drugg[illegible] patient in a fun-loving psychiat[illegible] "hospital"; a fugitive fleeing fr[illegible] one dreary Siberian job to the n[illegible] till he ended up on the "slime lir[illegible] of a huge factory ship whose task[illegible] was to process tons of fish hauled[illegible] by American trawlers in the Ber[illegible] Strait; and a detective again wh[illegible] he was suddenly summoned from l[illegible] low-deck with the dead mackerel[illegible] investigate the murder of a you[illegible] woman whose naked body turned[illegible] in a fishing net. Having follow[illegible] Renko across an ice cap into t[illegible] rhetoric of the Gorbachev era, I [illegible] cided that a psychiatric hospital [illegible] preferable to a factory ship and [illegible] solved never to eat fish again.

WOLVES EAT DOGS (Simon [illegible] Schuster, $25.95) brings Renko [illegible] to date in a new Russia that's lik[illegible] big casino, where honesty's out a[illegible] the fix is in. The suicide of one [illegible] the new plutocrats turns out to [illegible] volve a surprising amount of salt a[illegible] a surprising amount of radiatic[illegible] Against the wishes of almost eve[illegible] body, Renko ends up on a motor[illegible] cle in the Zone of Exclusion arou[illegible] Chernobyl, site of the horrific 19[illegible] meltdown, a ghost world of "[illegible] forests" and "black villages," of spe[illegible] uranium, radioactive milk, "bor[illegible] seeking" cesium, and eye-eati[illegible] wolves; where physicists, ecologi[illegible] squatters, scavengers, poachers, a[illegible] thieves sort poppies, mushroor[illegible] and blood samples in the shadow[illegible] Reactor Four; where profiteers tra[illegible] in poison, cops are bought and s[illegible] on a mafia exchange, and Ren[illegible] falls in love. Christa Wolf wrote t[illegible] only other Chernobyl novel I kn[illegible] of, *Accident: A Day's News* (198[illegible] before the Berlin Wall came do[illegible] around her and then a scary silen[illegible] But *Accident* was a meditation, fr[illegible] a distance; *Wolves* eats our eyes.

[illegible] after Andreas-Ludwig Kruger/Private Collection/The Stapleton Collection/Bridgeman Art Lib[illegible]

# HE APOCALYPSE WILL E TELEVISED

## rmageddon in an age of entertainment

*Gene Lyons*

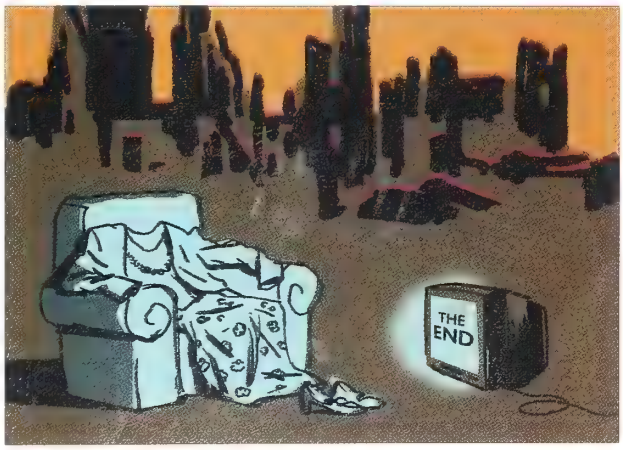
ussed in this essay:

*ious Appearing*, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Tyndale House Pubshers, 2004. 399 pages. $24.99.
*ssins*, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Tyndale House Publishers, 1999. 13 pages. $14.99.
*lae*, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Tyndale House Publishers, 1997. 15 pages. $14.99.
*Behind*, by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Tyndale House Publishers, 995. 468 pages. $14.99.
*Rapture Exposed*, by Barbara R. Rossing. Westview Press, 2004. 212 pages. $24.

ıt when a Man's Fancy gets *astride* on s Reason, when Imagination is at uffs with the Senses, and common nderstanding, as well as ›mmon Sense, is Kickt out Doors; the first Proselyte e makes, is Himself, and ıen that is once compass'd, e Difficulty is not so great bringing over others; a ong Delusion always opering from *without*, as vigorısly as from *within*.

—Jonathan Swift,
*A Tale of a Tub*

After living in the Bible Belt for more than thirty years, I've ıed several things about fundamentalist Christ›rethren: First, theirs is mbattled faith, which requires an evolving list of enemies to keep its s. It includes Satan worshipers one , "secular humanists" the next. ic over backward masking on ıograph records yields to fears that rmarket bar codes harbor the Mark e Beast. Some years back, Procter amble was forced to deny wide-




spread rumors that a moon-and-stars logo on boxes of soapsuds symbolized corporate diabolism. More recently, purging school libraries of Harry Potter's witchcraft has emerged as a cause. As if the real world weren't scary enough, chimerical threats must be found. It often appears that no form of occultism is too arcane or preposterous to provoke alarm.

I've also learned that fundamentalist Christianity's spiritual entrepreneurs are never more dogmatic than when they are ignoring, if not contradicting, the essence of Jesus Christ's teachings. The basic con is to insist upon the historical and scientific accuracy of every syllable in the Bible—then to analyze its symbolism, unveil hidden acrostics, and decode secret messages known only to initiates. The Book of Genesis is reduced to a biology text, and Daniel becomes a crystal ball. Thus are delivered the comforts of certitude and the enchantments of sorcery in a single beguiling package.

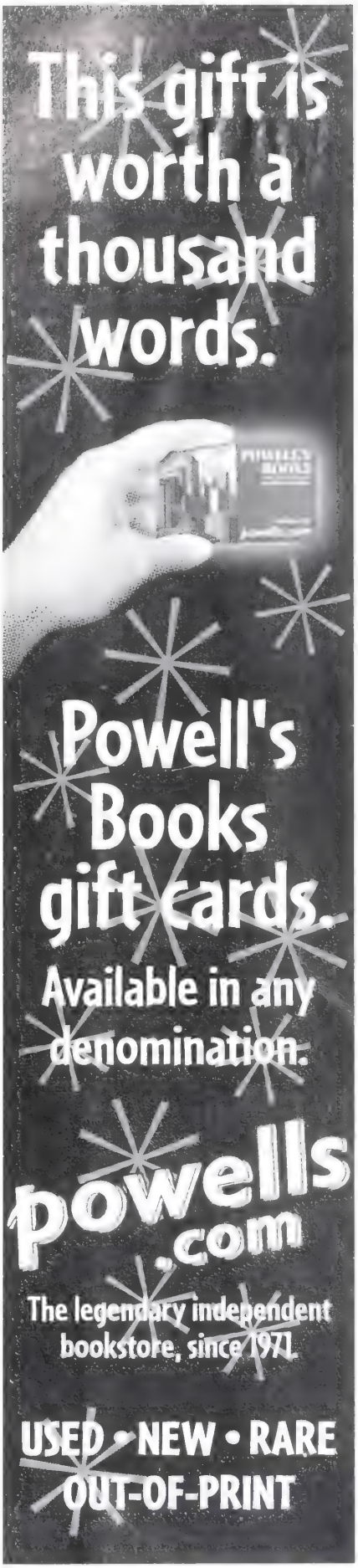
This is not to suggest insincerity. As Swift noted in *A Tale of a Tub*, his 1704 satire of religious extremists (by which he meant Catholics and Presbyterians), the successful propagandist is most often his own first victim. But it does begin to explain the huge commercial success of the Left Behind series of eschatological thrillers by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, a twelve-novel extravaganza combining a blandly paranoid worldview with crackpot theology to produce a form of biblical infotainment seemingly irresistible to a reported 42 million readers. (This is apparently a cumulative sales figure; the number of individuals slogging their way through the series is much smaller.)

Forget all that sentimental gibberish about blessed peacemakers, turning the other cheek, and loving your enemies. If there are references to the Sermon on the Mount among Left Behind's roughly 1 million words, I failed to find them. Depicting the "End Times" as an action/adventure melodrama similar to Arnold Schwarzenegger's *Terminator* films, the books portray midwestern suburbanites and born-again Israeli converts as Warrior Jesus' allies in an apocalyptic struggle against a U.N.-anointed "World Potentate," who looks "not unlike a younger Robert Redford" and speaks the language of science and liberal internationalism.

Yet the media's response to all of this nonsense has been remarkably polite. In America, of course, with commercial success comes a degree of cultural respectability. If millions of consumers succumb to a childish revenge fantasy that takes the Christ out of Christianity and treats the

*e Lyons's last review for* Harper's *azine, "The Media is the Message," ared in the October 2003 issue.*

ıtion by Matt Dennis




Bible as a cosmic *Daily Racing Form*, we dare not scoff at the merchandise. Indeed, the religious right is the biggest beneficiary of the "political correctness" it affects to deplore. Views H. L. Mencken, once derided as the "idiotic hallucinations of the cow states" now command respect more or less proportionate to their market share.

So it is that the authors find themselves consulted regularly on matters ecclesiastical by publications ranging from the *New York Times* to *Entertainment Weekly*. A 2002 profile in *Time* magazine pronounced Dr. LaHaye an "influential theologian." (Academic titles are very big among graduates of Bob Jones University.) "Within a few hours after we met for the first time," its author enthused, "LaHaye gave me advice about my career, my love life and my salvation—and yet his questions didn't feel intrusive. He's that genuine."

Genuinely deluded is perhaps closer to the truth. Written as the sidebar to a classic newsmag cover story about the "trend" toward apocalyptic melodrama in post-9/11 America, the *Time* profile did mention LaHaye's attacks on Catholicism as a "false religion," but it soft-pedaled his zeal for the granddaddy of nutball conspiracy theories: the "Bavarian Illuminati." Adepts believe that this shadowy cabal of European-Jewish bankers and secret fraternities such as Skull & Bones has stage-managed world events since the late eighteenth century. (Some contend that America was betrayed into sin when George Washington was secretly assassinated and an impostor named Dr. Adam Weishaupt assumed the presidency.) In his 2002 book *The Rapture*, LaHaye indignantly defended himself against a John Birch Society critic who accused him of being in cahoots with the Illuminati. To the contrary—LaHaye pronounces himself an avowed enemy of what he calls the "satanically-inspired, centuries-old conspiracy to use government, education, and media to destroy every vestige of Christianity within our society and establish a new world order."

"How fading and insipid," Sw
wrote, "do all Objects acc
us that are not convey'd
the Vehicle of *Delusion*!" And
deed, such preposterous vie
haven't prevented LaHaye from
vancing in the world. As an eccl
astical go-getter, he has few peers
co-founder, along with the Rev. J
ry Falwell, of the Moral Majori
LaHaye now heads something cal
the Tim LaHaye School of Prop
cy, at Liberty University in Virgi
Another of LaHaye's visionary p
ects is the secretive Council on N
tional Policy, which functions a
sort of theological popular front
evangelical preachers and politici
on the far right. And his allia
with Jerry B. Jenkins (writer of
*Gil Thorp* comic strip, former ed
of the Moody Bible Instit
magazine, and author of more th
one hundred quickie boo
including celebrity "autobiograph
of Billy Graham and Orel Hershi
has turned LaHaye into a be
selling novelist.

As the careers of such dispar
authors as Ayn Rand and D.
Lawrence demonstrate, eccen
ideas are no impediment to wri
novels. Almost any worldview c
patible with sanity, in the med
sense, can serve as the scaffoldin
readable fiction. Orwell wrote ab
what he called "good bad books,"
guing that "intellectual refinem
can be a disadvantage to a st
teller, as it would be to a music-
comedian"; what is necessary
strong convictions, an interest in
dividual human beings, and a po
ful instinct for narrative. We're
capable of suspending disbelief
the sake of a good story. So how
ously should we take the dust-ja
blurbs from reviewers who com
the Left Behind series to the wor
pop-fiction luminaries like T
Clancy and John Grisham? Or
put it another way, can anybody
infatuated with LaHaye and J
ins's theological views read the
els for pleasure?

The answer, I fear, is no. C
purely mimetic level, the no
scarcely exist as realistic or eve
allegorical fiction. These are n
for people who don't read novels

much of it is sheer didacticism: characters don't converse so h as they preach. "If I am right," ne-pilot-turned-holy-warrior ord Steele says,

> ıd we can set the beginning of the ribulation at the time of the signing the treaty between the nation of Is-el and what was then known as the nited Nations, we are perilously ose to and must prepare for the next ninous and dire prediction in the ribulation timeline: The Red Horse the Apocalypse. Revelation 6:3-4 dicates that it was granted to the ıe who sat on it to take peace from e earth, and that people should kill e another; and there was given to m a great sword. In my mind, this is prediction of global war. It will like-become known as World War III. It ll be instigated by the Antichrist, d yet he will rise as the great solver it, the great peacemaker, as he is e great deceiving liar.
>
> This will immediately usher in the xt two horses of the apocalypse, the ıck horse of plague and famine, and the le horse of death. These will be near-simultaneous—it should not surprise any of us to know that global war would result in famine, plague and death....

No, I don't reckon it should surprise us, although I have a little trouble picturing the Antichrist—this smooth-talking, Robert Redford look-alike—riding any horse, much less a real one. (The series is full of horses; some spectral, others real. Jesus and the Antichrist, for example, ride flesh-and-blood animals; the 200 million avenging horsemen of *Assassins*, however, the sixth novel in the series, are ghostlike creatures visible only to believers. Distinguishing among them must keep the scholars at the Tim LaHaye School of Prophecy very busy.)

Readers who find the foregoing a bit tedious, moreover, should be warned that Steele's speech, delivered as a sermon to his fellow "Tribulation Force" commandos in their underground bunker in Mt. Prospect, Illinois, occupies several pages, and that there are scores like it throughout the series. There is also an enormous amount of repetition and little plot suspense, since biblical prophecy invariably proves to be correct. Once saved, our heroes are incapable of error. No sooner do the scriptural coordinates indicate that the worldwide "wrath of the Lamb" earthquake is due—something the heathen geologists quoted in the secular press say can't happen—than dogs begin to run in circles, and Rayford sees an "entire eighteen-story building, filled with hundreds of employees, [crash] to the ground in a mighty roar and a cloud of dust."

We're told that the carnage horrifies the Tribulation Force heroes, but it actually seems to leave them feeling awfully smug. The climax of *Nicolae*, the third novel in the series, comes when Rayford Steele, whose day job is flying the Antichrist's jumbo jet, beholds New Babylon in ruins and seethes through clenched teeth, "Let me be the first to tell you: You have just seen the wrath of the Lamb!" All the sophisticates, you see, have been mocking each prediction and explaining away every miraculous event as a freak of


Write
where things are happening

"The role of a writer is not to
y what we can all say, but
hat we are unable to say."
Anaïs Nin

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*Jenoyne Adams • Kim Addonizio • Dorothy Allison • [illegible] • Charles [illegible] • Pearl Cleage • Richard Cooper • Mark [illegible] • [illegible] • Jane [illegible] • Alice Gaines • Hamill • Achy Obejas • Alicia Ostriker*

150

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[illegible] attack [illegible]

[illegible] we're told to set [illegible] entering the Tribulation Force's [illegible] canaries could have directed the faithful to Matthew 24:36, in which Christ warned his disciples on the Mount of Olives not to distract themselves searching for signs of the Second Coming because "no one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Indeed, the entirety of Matthew 24–5, dubbed the "Olivet Discourse" and deemed by LaHaye "the prophetic clothesline on which every other Bible prophecy ought to be hung," appears to warn against precisely the sort of spiritual hucksterism practiced by End Times entrepreneurs. Jesus repeatedly cautioned against false prophets and narrated four parables, among them the tale of the foolish virgins who missed a wedding banquet after allowing their oil lamps to burn out before the bridegroom returned to summon them. "Therefore keep watch," Christ warned, "because you do not know on what day your Lord will come." Lest the message be misunderstood, it's also repeated in Acts 1:7. Asked by his disciples when he would restore the kingdom to Israel, Jesus responded: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

Few traditional Christian doctrines could possibly be clearer: the Bible was never intended as a horoscope or a Ouija board. In the Left Behind novels, however, the Book of Revelation is treated as a sort of divine airline schedule. The action begins high over the Atlantic Ocean, where three of God's chosen happen to be enroute to London on a 747 piloted by the aforementioned Rayford Steele, who's got the hots for flight attendant Hattie Durham because his wife, Irene, has turned into what used to be called a "Jesus freak." (LaHaye has said that the idea for the series came to him in a moment of divine inspiration when he noticed a young stewardess flirting with an airline captain wearing a wedding ring.)

> Would it fade, [Irene's] preoccupation with the end of the world, with the love of Jesus, with the salvation of souls? Lately she had been reading everything she could get her hands on about the rapture of the church. "Can you imagine, Rayford," she exulted, "Jesus coming back to get us before we die?"

A believer in "rules, systems, laws, patterns" who thinks he's smarter than most people, Steele, the lukewarm Christian, cannot. Also aboard is Cameron "Buck" Williams, of *Global Weekly*, the brilliant journalist whose nickname derives from his penchant for "bucking" authority. Like Rayford, he's a self-styled brainiac, a smug Ivy Leaguer ("Don't start calling me a Christian. Deist is as much as I'll cop to") who deems himself too sophisticated for God. Buck's just back from Hatta, where, in the course of interviewing Dr. Chaim Rosenzweig—*Global Weekly*'s "Newsmaker of the Year" and the noted scientist whose magical elixir has caused the desert to bloom, thereby turning Israel into the richest nation on earth—he witnessed the "Russian Pearl Harbor," an all-out attempt to annihilate the Jewish state. But the sneak attack failed. Propelled by forces unknown, the entire Russian Air Force, ICBMs and all, exploded in the sky. "Anything atomic and explosive erupted high in the atmosphere. . . . Miraculously, not one casualty was reported in all of Israel." Buck idly wonders if a prophecy in Ezekiel 38–9 had anything to do with it, but he puts the thought out of his mind.

Scholars of the End Times genre may see the "Russian Pearl Harbor" business as an oblique tribute to Hal Lindsey's 1970 bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Ironically, given American fundamentalism's historic ambivalence about Jews, it was the 1948 founding of Israel, coming as it did near the end of the millennium, that gave the End Times prophecy industry a boost. Hence Israeli Jews play a strange role in the Left Behind series, existing to be converted or slaughtered. As God's chosen, they are to be protected from harm until the battle of Armageddon, at which point they must either accept Jesus as their Messiah or die.

Suddenly, high over the Atlantic a miracle takes place: "Only thing I can compare it to," another pilot tells R[ayford], "is the old *Star Trek* shows wh[ere] people got dematerialized and rem[ate]rialized, beamed all over the pla[ce]. Indeed, all over the world, millio[ns] born-again Christians have vanis[hed] into the mystical ether—leaving [be]hind their clothing, their eyegla[sses], even their dentures—along with e[very] child under the age of twelve. . . . planes are crashing, automobiles [are] veering driverless and out of con[trol] and fetuses are disappearing from t[heir] mothers' wombs, as the born-again [and] the unborn alike are abruptly "[ra]tured" to heaven.

More about this curious doctr[ine] concocted in the nineteenth cen[tury] by a Glasgow evangelist named J[ohn] Darby, in due time. All Buck knov[s] that he needs to contact his edi[tor] which requires patching his lapto[p] the in-flight phone and leads to [the] following inane exchange:

> "Listen, beautiful Hattie, are we c[ertain] we not looking at the end of the w[orld] as we know it?"
>
> "Don't patronize me, sir. I can't [help] you sit here and vandalize airline p[rop]erty."

Half the passengers on the airpl[ane] have dematerialized, and all this [ob]cious bumbo can think about is c[om]pany policy? When Buck does ma[nage] to reach his editor (the fact that n[one] of his journalist colleagues has b[een] raptured is the closest thing to a jok[e] the entire series), he's assigned to w[rite] about worldwide currency reform [and] an intriguing United Nations w[ork]erkind named Nicolae Carpathi[a].

Now, there's your liberal media [at] in action: there aren't enough t[ele]cartons on earth to picture all the r[un]ning kids, and the hot scoop is s[ome] joker from Romania promising [uni]versal peace. Designated *Pe[ople]* magazine's "sexiest man ali[ve]" Carpathia is also pro-choice, advoc[ates] high taxes on oil for the sake of the [en]vironment, speaks six languages [with] equal facility, and talks glowingly [of a] "new world order." Lest readers [miss] the clues, the authors lay the f[ore]shadowing in with a trowel, when R[ay]ford Steele consoles his second [wife] after Carpathia insults her:

> "Hon, do you see no irony in [Carpathia] being offended by the man we're

nced is the Antichrist?... You expect
ommon courtesy and decency from the
ost evil man in the history of the uni-
erse?"

"... When you put it that way," she
uttered, "I suppose I am being over-
nsitive."

here's a scene in *Nicolae* in which
k Williams, by now a so-called
ılation saint and married to Ray-
Steele's daughter, hears on CNN
o that Nicolae the Antichrist has
ed Manhattan. (Although, of
se, the godless media don't put it
way.) Fleeing Chicago, Buck sees
ıshroom cloud rising near O'Hare
ort. Thinking fast, he drives across
median, whips into a Land Rover
ership, plunks down a company
it card, and drives off—"carefully,"
e told—in a "beautiful, new, earth-
d Range Rover." Scolded by his
ful suburban wife for reckless
ıding, he explains his decision,
ıding like nothing so much as the
el version of Chuck Berry's "No
ney Down":

Chloe ... look at this rig. It has every-
ing. It will go anywhere. It's inde-
ructible. It comes with a phone. It
omes with a citizen's band radio. It
omes with a fire extinguisher, a sur-
val kit, flares, you name it. It has four-
heel drive, all-wheel drive, indepen-
nt suspension, a CD player that plays
ose new two-inch jobs, electrical out-
ts in the dashboard that allow you to
nnect whatever you want directly to
e battery."

e can't help but wonder if it also
es with a nifty "research" expense
iction on the authors' tax returns.)
n the most rudimentary realism is
nd the LaHaye-Jenkins team's
ginative reach. World War III has
n, the city is under nuclear at-
, and car salesmen are sitting
nd the showroom writing up con-
s and—somewhat improbably—
pting credit cards.

efore long, in the name of peace,
ld Potentate Carpathia has also
ped megaton devices on London,
treal, Toronto, Mexico City, Dal-
San Francisco, Los Angeles, and
hington. The "wrath of the Lamb"
ıquake has exterminated one quar-
f the world's surviving population.
he Tribulation Force warriors ex-
nce no difficulty zipping all over the world by Learjet, keeping in touch by cell phone, spreading the Gospel over the Internet, and tracking Nicolae Carpathia's schemes on CNN.

Psychologically speaking, the series makes the average Harlequin romance look like *Madame Bovary*. Consistent with fundamentalist preoccupations, the only sins are sexual, and no sooner does Rayford Steele understand that his wife and sons have been raptured off to heaven than he's cured of Hattie Durham fever at once and forever:

> He knew Hattie was not a bad person. In fact, she was nice and friendly. But that was not why he had been interested in her. It had merely been a physical attraction, something he had been smart enough or lucky enough or naïve enough not to have acted upon. He felt guilty for having considered it.

As to whether Hattie is short or tall, blonde or brunette, slender or zaftig, readers haven't been told; only that she's "drop-dead gorgeous" (an unfortunate cliché, under the circumstances) and much younger. And now that Rayford is a Christian, he's duty-bound to save Hattie's soul, even after she becomes Nicolae Carpathia's mistress—and especially after she becomes pregnant. (God can exterminate millions on a whim, but it's crucial that nice, friendly Hattie not abort the Antichrist's baby.)

It's not until *Glorious Appearing*, the twelfth and final novel in the Left Behind series, that the comic-grotesque aspects of this whole rapture business become simply disturbing. Here are our heroes, zipping around the Holy Land on ATVs, when G.I. Jesus finally materializes in the sky, mounted on a white horse and costumed like a professional wrestler:

> He wore a robe down to the feet so brilliantly white it was incandescent and bore writing, something in a language wholly unfamiliar to Rayford and something else he easily understood. On His robe at the thigh a name was written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Jesus was girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow. His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace.

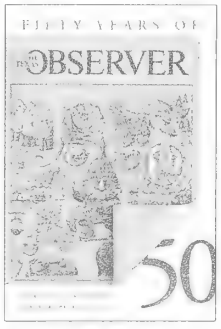
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—Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost*

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outfit [illegible] in [illegible] ...ic and [illegible]lle, like a nineteenth-[illegible]. The armies of [illegible] horses follow, though their role in the battle ends up being superfluous. The Antichrist's black-clad legions ride horses, too, possibly because they explode so satisfactorily. No sooner does Jesus speak than the carnage begins. Carpathia's legions begin to fall dead, "their bodies ripped open, blood pooling in great masses."

Seeking a better view of the action, Rayford abandons his ATV for a Hummer, "riding shotgun," which, write Jenkins and LaHaye in something less than a Proustian reverie, "transported him back to college when he and his fraternity brothers would compete to call the favored seat, sometimes as much as twenty-four hours before a trip." Meanwhile, the slaughter runs on for close to eighty gleeful pages:

> Rayford watched through the binocs as men and women soldiers and horses seemed to explode where they stood. It was as if the very words of the Lord had superheated their blood, causing it to burst through their veins and skin. . . . Their innards and entrails gushed to the desert floor, and as those around them turned to run, they too were slain, their blood pooling and rising in the unforgiving brightness of the glory of Christ.

The glory of Christ, mind you. Blood is described roaring through the Holy Land in rivers five feet deep. At one point, the Antichrist's Humvee sinks up to its axles in a swamp of blood-mud. Dressed in black and sneering like Ming the Merciless in an old *Flash Gordon* serial, Carpathia eventually flees toward Jerusalem. "This One who flits about in the air quoting ancient fairy tale texts and forcing sycophants to mindlessly run along worshipping Him," he vows, "will soon meet His end."

As in every action/adventure flick for rent at Blockbuster, it's obligatory that Mr. Big survive until the final showdown. But we all know how this story ends. Our heroes' need to array themselves against the mighty armies of the Antichrist on the battlefield at Armageddon is never explained; not only is the entire event being televised worldwide like some cosmic Super Bowl but everything's foreordained to happen precisely as it does happen (as we're repeatedly assured by the scholarly Dr. Rosenzweig, whose timely conversion has turned him into Tribulation Force's number one Jew for Jesus). God finished this screenplay a very long time ago, and there aren't going to be any rewrites. "Lucifer, dragon, serpent, devil, Satan," the archangel Gabriel commands, "you will now face the One you have opposed from time immemorial." After which Jesus adds, "For all your lies about having evolved, you are a created being."

Evolved? It all comes down to that? God is going to straighten Satan out about evolution versus creationism on Judgment Day? Apparently so. There will also be happy political consequences in getting rid of all the skeptics, unbelievers, and adepts of rival faiths. Rayford wonders if, just maybe, with only believers "left in the United States . . . would there be enough of them to start rebuilding the country as, finally for real, a Christian nation?"

How seriously the rest of us need to take a primitive revenge fantasy like the Left Behind novels is hard to say. While daydreaming about Armageddon, most readers, I'm guessing, are also signing off on thirty-year mortgage notes and keeping their life insurance up to date. Intellectually, the "rapture racket," as Barbara R. Rossing calls it in her lucid and passionate book *The Rapture Exposed*, owes its origins to nineteenth-century turmoil over Darwinism. A professor of the New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, Rossing argues persuasively that certain people are attracted to Darby's "dispensationalist system with its Rapture theology because it is so comprehensive and *rational*—almost science like—a feature that made it especially appealing during battles over evolution during the 1920s and 1930s."

Lord it reads like very bad literary criticism, although it's admittedly tempting to admire the sheer ingenuity of a biblical "system" that turns Beelzebub into a "peacenik" and Je[illegible] Christ into a bloody-handed aven[illegible] *The Rapture*, one of LaHaye's f[illegible] non-fiction books, is densely pack[illegible] with charts, tables, graphs, and list[illegible] biblical citations that, if rearranged[illegible] the proper order, constitute thunc[illegible]ous proof that Christ's Second C[illegible]ing will be a two-stage event —f[illegible] the "rapture," then the killer Laml[illegible] Revelation on the rampage. The[illegible] even a diverting passage in wh[illegible] making a great show of scholarly [illegible]jectivity, LaHaye comes close to [illegible]vealing his own hocus pocus. He c[illegible]cedes, "No one passage of Script[illegible] teaches the two phases of Christ's s[illegible]ond coming separated by the Tribu[illegible]tion." But, he adds, "no one pass[illegible] teaches against the pre-Trib view," [illegible]ther. Of course, the Bible is likew[illegible] silent on the Treaty of Versailles [illegible] the designated-hitter rule.

By no means are all, or even m[illegible] evangelical Christians comforta[illegible] seeing their faith turned into fortu[illegible] telling. Rossing quotes an array[illegible] contemporary theologians who rej[illegible] what one disapprovingly describes [illegible] "this perverse parody of John 3: [illegible] 'God so loved the world that he s[illegible] it World War III.'" As noisy z[illegible] overwhelms more reasonable voic[illegible] however, the Left Behind hubb[illegible] strikes me as symptomatic of the [illegible] graded state into which Americ[illegible] Puritanism has fallen. In Bunya[illegible] *Pilgrim's Progress*, the runaway r[illegible] gious bestseller of the seventeen[illegible] century, Christian's allegorical jo[illegible] ney to the Celestial City involved [illegible] essentially inward quest. His encou[illegible] ters with the Giant Despair and [illegible] Worldly-Wiseman forced him c[illegible] tinually to search and re-search [illegible] mind and spirit for evidence of [illegible] tan's wiles. LaHaye and Jenkins c[illegible] vert what was once the spiritual a[illegible] psychological drama of salvation i[illegible] escapist melodrama, Puritan s[illegible] examination into messianic nar[illegible] sism. Satan is the Other, basica[illegible] anything you fear and don't und[illegible] stand. The books are pagan tribali[illegible] writ large, complete with soothsay[illegible] and magic spells. All of history [illegible] conspired to turn suburban Am[illegible] cans into apocalyptic superhero[illegible] The end is near, and dude—you [illegible] like, the star!

# MONG THE BELIEVERS

## e politics of sin and secularism

*David A. Hollinger*

ssed in this essay:

*re Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*, by James A. Morone. Yale iversity Press, 2004. 575 pages. $18.
*inkers: A History of American Secularism*, by Susan Jacoby. Metropolitan oks, 2004. 352 pages. $27.50.

a nation whose Constitution oes not even mention God and hose population now includes a antial number of non-be- s, the Bush Administration's ayal of the United States as mmunity of the faithful is challenged with the vigor night expect. Leading De- ats incline toward me-too rations of piety, mitigated lightly by polite appeals to eparation between church tate, as certain politicians public policy with literal retations of the Bible and ls to the authority of God. vers, it seems, are left alone c amongst themselves, with a challenge to the sancti- of their ways.

o new books explain the lence of the faithful and the ity of those with more secu- clinations. James A. Mo- *Hellfire Nation* reminds us Christianity has played a r role in motivating and ng political movements ghout American history too many secular scholars been willing to acknowl- whereas Susan Jacoby's *Free- s* recovers a tradition of vig- secular criticism that has nto remission as twentieth- wenty-first-century secularists become curiously removed from debates about religious ideas. The population of the United States remains so much more avowedly religious than the population of any other country in the industrialized world, an anomalous condition that makes it profitable for politicians to invoke God and, consequently, creates a special challenge for secularists.



*Hellfire Nation* is a rousing, hyperbolic narrative, reinstating Puritanism in the major historical role that scholars of the 1940s and 1950s were willing to accord it. Against the insistence of so many contemporary academics that everything important can be explained in terms of race, class, and gender, Morone, a professor of political science at Brown University, declares that religion is central to the ways in which Americans have carried on in every aspect of their lives—especially in relation to those very identities that contemporary academics like to emphasize. Morone interprets much of American political history as an oscillation between progressive and conservative versions of the specifically Puritan moralism brought to Massachusetts Bay in the 1630s. As he sees it, the New Dealers of the 1930s and the student radicals of the 1960s were both part of "The Social Gospel at High Tide," a leftist variation on the tradition exemplified by the anti-abortion and "family values" crowd on the right.

Some of this Puritan essentialism is a stretch. Morone's narrative of the Left since World War II has no room for secular Jews, even in his history of the civil-rights movement. Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, for example, two white civil rights organizers murdered along with their black colleague, James Cheney, in Neshoba County, Mississippi, in 1964, were freethinking Jews, not religious believers. Morone also seems blind, perhaps even willfully so, to the overwhelmingly secularist sources of feminism in both its nineteenth- and twentieth-century expressions.

Nevertheless, most of *Hellfire Nation* is richly informative as well as fun to read. One of Morone's more arresting turns is to present Prohibition as a Protestant contribution to the rise of Big Government. The forbidding of liquor sales between 1920 and 1933, Morone posits, "yielded sprawling police powers, inspired new legal rules," and "prepared the cultural ground for the active government of the New Deal." Arguing against his colleagues in the political-science pro-

*A. Hollinger is Preston Hotchkis Pro- of History at the University of Cali- Berkeley. His books include* Science, nd Secular Culture *(Princeton).*

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fession who refuse to take religion seriously, Morone explores the roots in Christian moral teachings of movements calling for censorship, the abolition of slavery, the regulation of big business, and the guarantee of civil rights for African Americans.

For all its corrective value, however, Morone's analysis has a gaping hole. He is so enthralled with the discovery of religion that he virtually ignores the dialectical relationship with the Enlightenment that gives American religious history much of its dynamism and subtlety. He effaces the rationalist, humanist element in the liberal versions of Protestantism that make up his so-called leftist Puritans all the way to the 1960s; in a breezy chapter entitled "The Puritans Become America," Morone jets through the eighteenth century, avoiding the accommodation between Protestantism and the Enlightenment carried out by Puritan-descended John Adams—who is never mentioned—in creating the United States, and suddenly catapults readers from old Massachusetts Bay into the anti-slavery movement of the nineteenth century. And so much for the cosmopolitan revolutionary Tom Paine, who isn't mentioned either.

Fortunately, the author of *Common Sense* (1776) is one of the main characters in Susan Jacoby's *Freethinkers*, a book that nicely fills some of the chasm left open by Morone. Jacoby offers a lively account of those Americans who espoused a "concept of public good based on human reason and human rights rather than divine authority," a group that includes not only atheists and agnostics but also deists and those who maintained other liberal religious affiliations. Her subjects may have been skeptical in varying degrees about the specific doctrines espoused by their contemporaries, but, as Jacoby notes at the beginning of her book, what united them against the "religiously correct" was their "insistence on the distinction between private faith and the conduct of public affairs." They accepted Christianity as a formidable challenge to a healthy civic life, and they went after it with determination and a critical vigor.

Jacoby thus calls to our attention a tradition of analytical engagement with religious ideas that languished as twentieth-century secularists became c placently aloof and arrogantly dis sive. After all, if religion is in inevit decline, one can largely ignore it; is only for the weak-minded, str minds should not be wasted in its tique; and if religion is epipheno nal, its ideas need not be refuted tellectually, nor subjected to the s degree of critical scrutiny comm applied to economic and political id Prior to the spread of these secul conceits, freethinkers tried to get lievers to think through the basis their faith. No one was more tenac in this pursuit than the popu nineteenth-century orator Robert gersoll, who is rarely referred to now was somewhat of a celebrity betw the Civil War and his death in 18 (So threatening an irritant were secularist attacks on orthodox disco that clergymen compiled and dist uted volume after volume of "Mista of Ingersoll," which were modeled Ingersoll's own rationalist lectures the Old Testament entitled "Mista of Moses.") The Jewish anarch Emma Goldman, the birth-control oneer Margaret Sanger, and the foun of the American Civil Liberties Uni Roger Nash Baldwin, are among Ja by's other case studies in freethinki

Perhaps Jacoby's most instruct example is Elizabeth Cady Stant who was at once the most energe and influential leader of the Am can movement for women's suffr and one of the late-nineteenth c tury's most notorious critics of Ch tian orthodoxy. She boldly critici many passages in the Bible for p moting negative and false ideas ab women, such as St. Paul's declarat that the role of women was to "le in silence with all subjection," and argued that God was not male, but drogynous. She was exceptionally r ical for her time, advocating flexible vorce laws as well as freethinking vi on religious issues. Stanton's style be contrasted to that of H. L. Men en, the iconoclastic writer of the 19 whose scorn for "hicks" and "boo won plaudits from those who agr with him, but whose open conten for the masses fostered an era in wh "Menckenesque" denunciations of ligion were insufficiently discern about different kinds of religious bel

con respected the basic humanity
igious believers and earnestly tried
ow them the error of their ways.
t even Stanton's sober style of
alism embarrassed her allies in
uffrage movement. The suffrag-
of the early twentieth century
played her legacy and presented
e face of suffrage her less threat-
g associate and protégé, Susan B.
nony. Feminists of the 1980s re-
vered and praised Stanton, but
ong omission of her freethinking
has had effects felt even today;
ne, for example, mentions Eliza-
Cady Stanton nine times in *Hell-
Nation* but never refers to Stan-
actual ideas about religion.

Taken together, *Hellfire Nation* and *Freethinkers* tell us much that we need to know about the ry of religion and politics in the ed States, yet neither Morone nor y confronts effectively the ques- of why religious affiliations, which bating in most other industrial- ations, continue to loom so large nerican society. For the most part, y avoids the issue altogether, as if pensity for religious belief were y a defect in intellect or charac- viting no further explanation— gh she does try at one point to st that the secularist heritage of and James Madison has been lost y because of the skillful machi- ns of the Religious Right. Mo- is at least aware of the need for a r explanation than this: he at- es the perpetuation of Puritan lism as a reaction to the "open uid society" created by wave after of immigration. "Without a sta- ultural archetype to determine belongs," hypothesizes Morone, ericans measure one another by a ly delineated, highly moralistic of conduct," applied invidiously to new set of "different" Americans. ere may be something to this, but ir conditions exist in a country as Canada, without the same re- Something else must fuel the per- tion of Puritanism in the United s; indeed, I would argue that this ething else" is the very church- separation dear to Jacoby's cast racters and worrisome to many of ne's subjects. It is the absence of

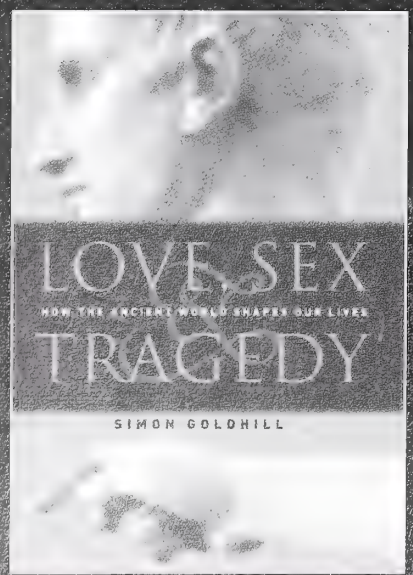

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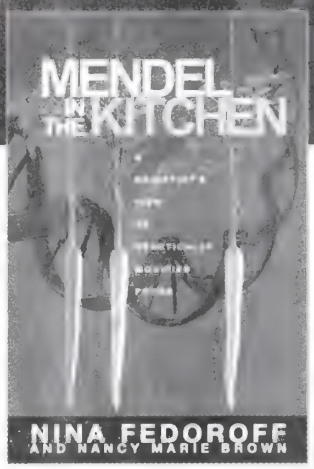
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NOTES FOR "BAD LUCK":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

ACROSS: 14. *; 15. (f)utile; 16. *; 17. "Alps" shot; 18. c-lose; 19. *; 20. op-pose; 23. two mngs.; 24. *; 25. clar(in)et; 26. *; 29. a-(pi)Aries; 30. M.(if)F.; 31. bug-le; 33. ha-track; 35. wag(g[ir]l)e; 36. homonym; 37. hidden; 38. H-as-H; 39. hidden; 41. *; 43. root-let; 44. homonym; 45. see(d).

DOWN: 1. *; 2. (d)rill; 3. *; 4. two mngs.; 5. a-U-then-ticated*; 6. dic(t-at)es; 7. Gore-cattlemen*; 8. reversal; 9. passion-flower; 10. two mngs.; 11. boarding-house; 12. *; 13. *; 21. PLO-p; 22. reversal; 27. hidden; 28. Rub-E; 32. L-en-net(rev.); 34. a-lo-of; 35. fra-h(o)w (rev.); 40. M.I.(t)T.; 42. (M)Ali.

an established church in the U[nited] States, coupled with the guarante[e] the free exercise of religion, that has abled religious affiliation—like [v]oluntary organizations in civil s[o]ciety—to function as a vital medi[um] between the individual and the nat[ion].

In the United Kingdom, Sca[n]navia, and most of continental Eu[rope] outside of France, some form of Ch[ris]tianity has been part of the state a[p]paratus throughout the nineteenth [and] twentieth centuries. Although t[hese] established affiliations have not [pre]vented the formation of dissentin[g] religious communities, by sustaini[ng] presumption that Christianity and state are the same, they have di[m]ished the perception of churche[s] communities independent of the s[tate] that can therefore serve as alterna[tive] solidarities. In the United States, [by] contrast, where the demographic [di]versity noted by Morone intensifie[s] need for meaningful, mediating af[fili]ations, religiously defined collectiv[ities] can serve this demand because [we] have been liberated by the chu[rch]-state separation. (France is uniqu[e] because it combines the church-state [sep]aration with a powerful style of [civic] republicanism that discourages the [dis]play of diversity and the prolifera[tion] of voluntary societies.)

In other words, the anomalous [per]sistence of Christianity in the U[nited] States amid the social and econ[omic] conditions of industrialization is [large]ly explained by the structure and f[unc]tion of churches themselves. A [soci]ologist might note that churc[hes] similar to other popular forms of [asso]iation such as fraternal lodges and [ser]vice clubs, provide social solidari[ty] units of manageable size whose [au]thority derives from traditions tha[t] easily accessible to masses of pe[ople] with varying amounts of educa[tion]. Protestant denominations and [other] religious affiliations are like the c[ore] ethnic-descent groups with which [they] sometimes overlap, insofar as the[y] liver a community and a sense [of] longing more intimate than th[e na]tion yet larger than the exte[nded] family. Being "religious"—whe[ther] Presbyterian or Catholic or Af[rican] Methodist Episcopal or Muslim—[can] provide a way of being "America[n]" a country whose national ident[ity]

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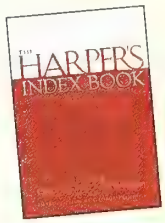


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itself constituted by a dispersal of smaller groups whose identities are compatible with its own.

This understanding is consistent with the tendency of immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries to become more actively Catholic in the United States than they were in their country of origin, and it also accords with the popularity of Southern Baptist affiliation among Americans troubled by the liberal initiatives of the federal government since the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It explains, too, the historic role of African-American churches—which constituted a community independent from the state—as a base for the civil-rights movement. And the commodification of religion, as Laurence Moore and other historians have noted, has flourished because of the separation of church and state: religious entities, when detached from the established order, can be marketed by entrepreneurs alert to the needs that those religious affiliations can satisfy. In a society as consumer-oriented as the United States, the market mechanism becomes a force of its own for keeping religion alive.

The very church-state separation that might lead one to expect a more robust secularist tradition in the United States has, ironically, promoted a dynamic of religious affiliation in its stead. Religions, old and new, conservative and liberal, are likely to maintain their considerable clout in the United States for some time, influencing indirectly the public affairs of the nation—no matter how the Supreme Court interprets the constitutional provisions for the free exercise of religion and against the incursion of religious authority on matters of state.

Perhaps acceptance, however grudging, of this enduring condition could inspire a more vigorous and forthright debate about religious ideas themselves. It is far from obvious that the future of Christianity in the United States belongs to Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and the Catholic bishops who want to deny communion to politicians who deviate from Rome's pronouncements on abortion, but candid discussions of religious ideas are rare in the United States today. Believers argue among themselves and occasionally attack the academic and media elites for their godless ways, and secularists usually let the believers alone, treating their ideas as private matters to be respected or tolerated but not challenged. Only when confronted with something immediately threatening and scientifically obscurantist—such as the banning of evolution lessons by some willfully ignorant school board—do secularists actually bestir themselves to refute what is being said in God's name. When Al Gore claims to resolve life's tough questions by asking himself, "What Would Jesus Do?" he can count on the respectful silence of those who privately doubt the guidance promised by this pious principle of applied ethics. Although the vaunted "culture wars" have included some quarrels over how to interpret St. Paul's words on same-sex relationships, there has been very little sustained argumentation about the epistemic status of the Bible or the cogency of the notion of being "born again."

Religious ideas have become oddly privileged. Since most secularists consider religion a strictly private matter, they generally deem it impolite to express about a believer's religious ideas the kind of skepticism they might reveal in response to someone's notions about the economy or race or gender. Of course, there is no excuse for rudeness, yet the more impact on public affairs religious ideas are understood to have, the more troublesome this deference becomes. Jacoby's freethinkers understood that the society in which they lived depended in part on the basic view of the world accepted by their fellow citizens—hence Ingersoll and Stanton not only defended a clear church-state separation but commented on the merits of specific religious ideas held by their contemporaries. For the last sixty or seventy years, however, secularists have more often supposed that the ideas of religious believers did not matter; that the ideas could be scorned when out of the earshot of the faithful or, in mixed company, could be patronizingly indulged the way one might listen to the words of a child or an aged relative before tactfully changing the subject.

One result of this secularist complacency is that the religious ideas of the population have been shielded from a pointed, critical scrutiny they mi... otherwise have received. The chang... relation of the discipline of philo... phy to religion is as dramatic an il... tration as any. American philosoph... have experienced their greatest m... ments of intimacy with the Ameri... public when they spoke directly to ... religious anxieties of their audien... This was certainly true of Willi... James and Josiah Royce a century a... and to some extent of John Dewey, ... most influential American philosop... of the first half of the twentieth centu... Dewey eventually became a milit... secularist, but as he did so he enga... with Christian ideas by way of casti... doubt on them, defending secularism ... terms that his readers could understa... within the context of a shared Prot... tant past. To be sure, there remain ... tinguished philosophers who defen... religious worldview, but the disciplin... leaders in the major universities ra... attend to the ideas of the ancie... Mediterranean prophet George ... Bush named as his "favorite philo... pher": Jesus Christ.

My point is not that philosoph... should be more religious than th... are—I want only to note that the d... cipline that once contributed preci... analytic rigor to the evaluation of ... ligious ideas rarely treats religion a... respectable rival to secular worldvie... In part, the shift reflects a striking a... laudable change in the demograph... of American academia after 1945. T... integration of Jews into social scien... and humanities faculties ended t... Protestant cultural hegemony of t... leading colleges and created an ... mosphere in which Christian ide... were no longer privileged; the liber... tion was a major enrichment of Am... ican intellectual life, and the philos... phers, historians, literary scholars, a... social scientists who participated in ... were understandably reticent to tu... their analytic powers toward Christi... ideas in a society that had, until ... cently, excluded Jews as agents of "... Christianization."

This reserve in the face of a hea... ly Christian public contributed to t... expansion of the discursive vacu... that now exists. On one side of t... vacuum hovers the bulk of Americ...

*Continued on page*

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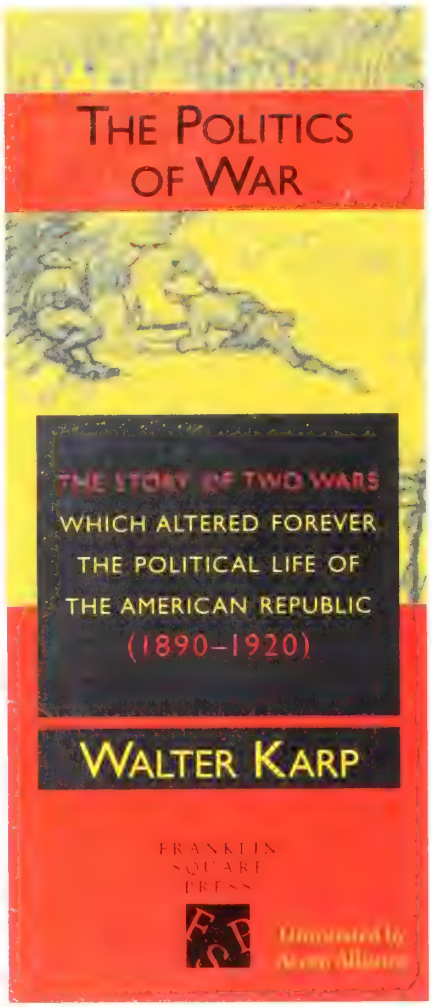
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## REVIEWS

*Continued from page 96*

intellectuals, isolated from the r
gious currents in American life t
are ready to be drawn upon by po
cians. On the other side of that v
um is distributed the majority of Ar
icans, isolated from the criti
tradition explored by Jacoby tha
renewed, might encourage popu
faiths more consistent with mod
standards of plausibility, more re
tant to the manipulation of politici
belonging to any party, and more
cepting of the wisdom in the sh
separation between church and st

The vacuum is filled with easy C
talk, like that of G. W. Bush wher
assures the world that his policie
Iraq correspond to God's will. H
different was the voice of Linc
who, as Jacoby reminds us, ne
joined a church, but who invoked
deity in a spirit of humility. In his S
ond Inaugural Address of 1865, L
coln cautiously alluded to "those div
attributes which the believers in a l
ing God always ascribe to him," sp
ulated about what such an omni
tent and omniscient God's will mi
be, and stopped well short of expr
ing confidence that, as president,
could be sure that God was on his s

Although we are not likely to f
another Lincoln, we could use a m
expansive, candid conversation ab
religious ideas, especially among se
larists and liberals of different fai
These liberal-religious voices h
plenty to offer to the public, and
one another; they might even disc
er that they have more in comm
across the religious-secular divide th
many of them imagine. And the t
ing may be just right. The greater
ligious diversification of American
ciety by Muslims, Hindus, and ope
non-religious persons of Christian
Jewish backgrounds in particular r
ders the United States a spiritually
ferent place from what it was dur
the early Cold War era, when se
larists cowered before Protestant
Catholic accusations of complic
with a "Godless Communism." W
*Hellfire Nation*, Morone shows us h
much there is to talk about, and w
*Freethinkers*, Jacoby shows us wh
needs to be said.

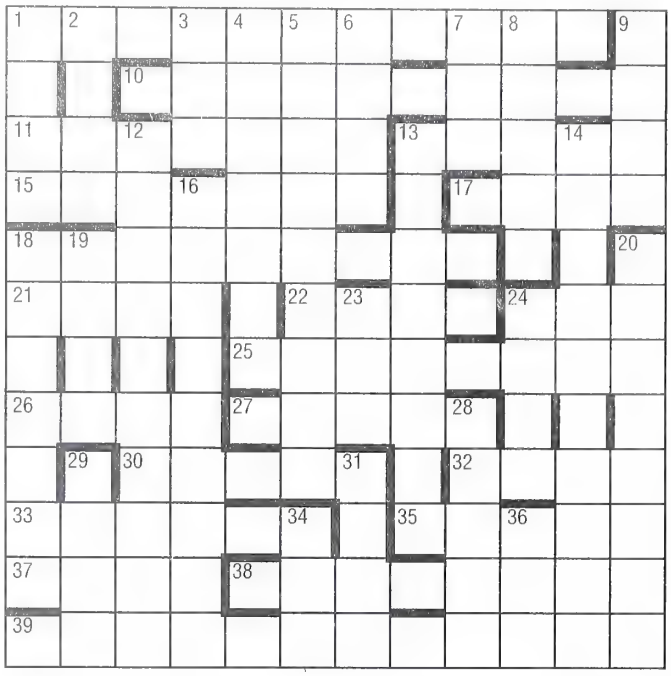
# Sensitivity Training—A Poem

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

*To disparage wood, stand-up reality pothead*
*Carried money—government subsidy;*
*Depraved jazzman's line having a bedroom manner:*
*Don Juan's suavity—hypochondria?*
*Oh well, punt*

Nine entries, clued separately, must be altered, in a sense, before they can be entered in diagram at locations determined by the solver. Hints to the nature of the altered forms are contained in the "poem" above, nine hints in all, written consecutively with no extra connectives.

Clue answers include five proper names. (Suitable apologies for the entry at 1 Across.) As always, mental re-punctuation is the key to deciphering the clues. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 94.



SEPARATE CLUES

A. Serial shows coordinate 151 c.c.'s first (6)
B. Medium-shaped spy in fashion (7)
C. Wine crate containing a rude representation (8)
D. King has to stagger about one kilometer—he doesn't want a come-back! (8)
E. During climb out, I questioned small outlet (8)
F. Bubbly winner, one taking silver instead of leader (9)
G. Diametric changes in parent's offing (9)
H. Autumn serves perfectly to limit one's wrong ideas (9)
I. Heartless anti-war person covers up damage from drug dealer (10)

ACROSS

1. *See poem*
10. Intervened in makeover, getting made up a second time (10)
11. A French story from Nice? (7)
13. Alcohol is cause for hurling (5)
15. Number it's written over at back stop (7)
17. They hold 33A back so merriment doesn't end (4)
18. *See poem*
21. Moved home, alas (2,2)
22. Comedian has ill-conceived line (4)
24. Little countrified cut flower (3)
25. *See poem*
26. Pitch to ship (4)
27. Worker on the rocks doesn't finish prank (5)
30. There's good in immoral acts. Rats (5)
32. Drink that helps make you zonked (4)
33. Story in articles from foreigners (6)
35. Could zoo broadcast problem of rampant weed? (5)
37. X is in the outskirts of Kansas (4)
38. *See poem*
39. *See poem*

DOWN

1. Articulate p-p-p-patch in a garden, perhaps (4)
2. Taking head off weight (4)
3. A mistake in baseball: popped up to left field (3)
4. Some drives throw up dirt when holding two clubs, perhaps (7)
5. Making free with corrupt union's log (9)
6. Scandinavian's lucky number (not #2) (4)
7. Article with a collection of anecdotes (3)
8. Pad things (5)
9. "Poetry in Motion" does (4)
12. *See poem*
13. *See poem*
14. *See poem*
16. Adolescent's ties, broken least (9)
18. *See poem*
19. State word of welcome between hugs? (4)
20. "Hulk" done badly—it's a dog! (8)
23. Diplomacy without leadership is a pose (3)
24. Place with renter would be rank! (4)
28. Taking over government, European wheels (5)
29. Trouble up to one's hips (4)
31. No land here, nor taken from Spanish women (4)
34. Met home unfinished for the woman (3)
36. Time period overlaps, yes, in two languages! (3)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Sensitivity Training," *Harper's Magazine*, 666 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by November 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one-year subscriptions to *Harper's Magazine*. Winners' names will be printed in the January 2005 issue. Winners of the September puzzle, "Split Personalities," are Anna Bricker, Ashland, Ohio; William F. Buchman, Chicago; and Michael Byrne, Raleigh, North Carolina.



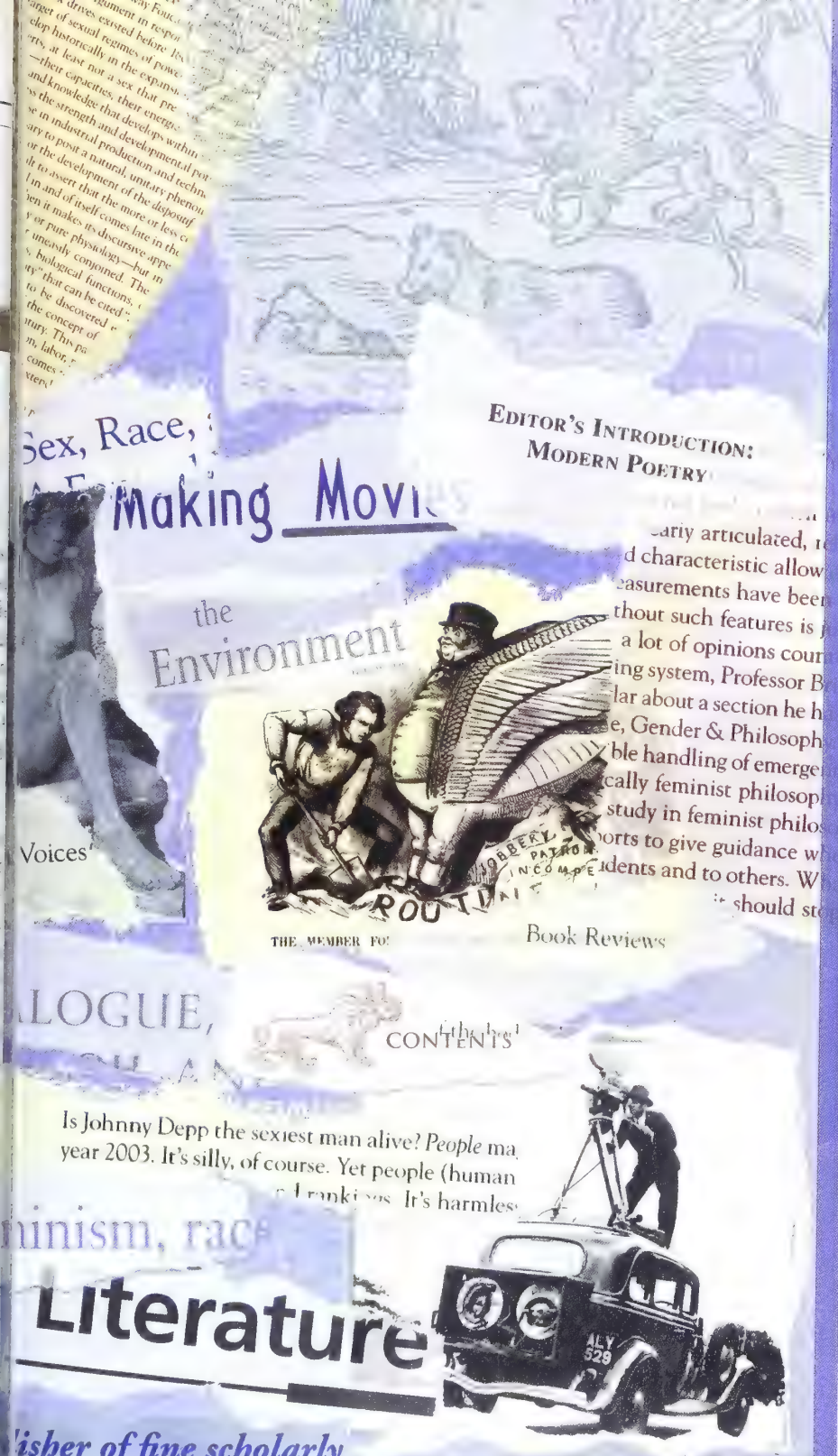
# FINDINGS

A fertility scientist in Kentucky claimed to have created viable embryos using cells from dead people and cow eggs, and said that the experiment (which used tissue from an eleven-year-old girl who died in a car crash, a dead eighteen-month-old baby, and a thirty-three-year-old dead man) proved that clones can be made of people after they have died. It was discovered that babies prefer to look at attractive people, and that sheep feel calmer when they see a picture of another sheep of the same breed. Scientists created a genetically modified fish that produces a human blood-clotting factor. A team of British scientists created artificial teeth primordia using bone-marrow stem cells taken from infant mice; the primordia successfully developed into teeth after they were implanted in the kidneys of other mice. A Kansas City company said that its synthetic urine (Surine) was proving popular with researchers. Argentine researchers discovered that smoking and drinking are bad for men's semen. Scientists found that when fruit flies are missing one of two genes that control the circadian clock, they have much greater sexual endurance. "What has been found in fruit flies," said one of the study's authors, "turns out to be true in humans in many ways." A man was arrested in West Monroe, Louisiana, for committing a crime against nature with his sister's 125-pound Vietnamese potbelly pig. Scientists created genetically engineered mice that can run farther and longer than normal mice. Buttock-augmentation surgery was said to be growing in popularity.

New research revealed that pollution affects the behavior of many animals, such as egrets, gulls, snails, quail, rats, macaques, minnows, mosquito fish, falcons, and frogs. Endosulfan weakens newts' sense of smell, lead disrupts the balance of gulls, and goldfish become hyperactive when exposed to atrazine. The United States was planning to develop portable nuclear power plants. A study showed that the air pollution created by cigarettes is ten times worse than that from diesel exhaust. The head of the Environmental Protection Agency said that fish in almost all lakes, rivers, and streams in the United States are contaminated with mercury. Canadian fishery experts found that Puget Sound orcas are contaminated with fire retardants. California adopted rules to control smog created by cow manure on farms. A new survey found that about 10 percent of the world's food crops are irrigated with sewage.

A British scientist warned that a gigantic section of La Palma island in the Canaries is poised to fall into the ocean, an event that would trigger "mega-tsunamis" 50 to 100 meters high that would crash into Africa's west coast, the Caribbean, and the eastern United States. The European Environment Agency said that winters on the continent could disappear by 2080. Scientists studying the mid-Atlantic ridge found a mysterious set of tracks along the ocean floor at a depth of 2,000 meters. Hippos were dying in Uganda. Russian scientists at the Voronezh State Technological Academy have perfected a method for using blood as a dairy replacement in foods such as yogurt, and German researchers sequenced the genome of the bacterium that causes acne. Swiss scientists found that people really do enjoy revenge. Canadian patients were complaining about the quality of government-grown pot, and British researchers created a genetically modified virus that infects and bursts cancer cells while leaving normal cells untouched. Feeding infants oranges and bananas could help prevent leukemia. Efforts to control the global spread of tuberculosis were failing, and the World Health Organization warned that SARS will probably return this winter. A new study found that *Legionella* bacteria, the cause of Legionnaire's disease, lurks in a quarter of all hot tubs, and psychologists warned that people who keep diaries are more likely to suffer from headaches, insomnia, digestive complaints, and social problems. ■

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# LETTERS

## Sins of Commission

Benjamin DeMott ["Whitewash as Public Service," Essay, October] clearly demonstrates the lamentable way in which the 9/11 Commissioners allowed President George W. Bush's blatant lie to pass without comment. The commissioners, before their encounter with Bush and Cheney, had already been regaled by shocking stories from numerous frustrated government and law-enforcement officials who had attempted to convince Bush and his administration of a looming danger in the months prior to September 2001. Based on those interviews, the commissioners knew that the administration had been nauseatingly lax and even criminally negligent. When asked about these alarming reports, Bush said—straightfaced—that there had been no such reports. Despite this mendacity, the commissioners glided blissfully past, apparently not wanting to alarm the nation or jeopardize their own carefully laid career plans.

The resulting report is a swirl of half-truths and informational black holes leaving a plethora of unanswered questions. What has been presented to this nation is an incomplete summation of a dea crime, a report designed to thwa real investigation while simulta ously cultivating a collective s etal ignorance.

*Joe Martin*
Seattle

Benjamin DeMott's eloquent ploration of the 9/11 Commission likely motives neglects to consi an elementary fact that accounts the derelict quality of their rep the commission was tainted conflicts of interest. A substan number of the Commissioners en tained either prior or contempora ous associations with the vari businesses and governmental enti within the purview of the comm sion's inquiry. Fred Fielding, for ample, was counsel to the Bu Cheney transition team, wh Richard Ben-Veniste, due to his firm's airline industry clients, co not participate in the commissi investigation of aviation issues. commission's executive direct Philip Zelikow, had previously authored a book with Condole Rice and served on the adminis tion's transition team within the tional Security Council. In fact, likow's involvement so blatan compromised the commission's tegrity that some of the 9/11 victi family members were prompted demand, publicly, his resignation.

*Chris Ronk*
New York City

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Benjamin DeMott neglects to highlight a fact about *The 9/11 Commission Report* that is more damning than the "whitewash" to which he refers. At the beginning of the report's fifth chapter, the commissioners write that Chapters 5 and 7 "rely heavily on information obtained from captured al Qaeda members. A number of these 'detainees' have firsthand knowledge of the 9/11 plot." They proceed to admit that:

> assessing the truth of statements by these witnesses—sworn enemies of the United States—is challenging. Our access to them has been limited to the review of intelligence reports based on communications received from the locations where the actual interrogations take place. We submitted questions for use in the interrogations, but had no control over whether, when, or how questions of particular interest would be asked. Nor were we allowed to talk to the interrogators so that we could better judge the credibility of the detainees and clarify ambiguities in the reporting. We were told that our requests might disrupt the sensitive interrogation process.

To wit: The official record of 9/11 is largely based on third-hand reports extracted from suspects held in extra-judicial detention using unknown and—following the Abu Ghraib revelations—undoubtedly dubious means. This casts a dark shadow on both the validity of that record and its legitimacy.

*Yoram Gat*
Palo Alto, Calif.

Benjamin DeMott's painstaking deconstruction of *The 9/11 Commission Report* leads him to conclude that President Bush lied. But DeMott's analysis also points to a far more disturbing conclusion: sheer incompetence on the part of our President and his advisers.

Bush's incompetence was vividly on display when he was informed that the country was under attack on the morning of September 11. It was clear that he had no idea what to do. And so it was with the NSC briefings and memos, not to mention the infamous August 6 Presidential Daily Brief, entitled "Bin Ladin Determined To Strike in U.S." The President did not heed any of these warnings, nor, apparently, did his advisers. No person of sound mind would have behaved so passively in the face of such fierce threats. One can only conclude that Bush and company did not understand them.

*Susanne Adams*
Fairfield, Conn.

Where blame extends to the Bush Administration is in the post-9/11 phase. As some commentators have noted, by leading many Americans to believe that Saddam Hussein was somehow involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, energy, lives, and funding that should have been directed fully at Bin Laden and his fanatics have been tragically wasted in Iraq. Due to the President's military actions in Iraq, the initial worldwide sympathy for the victims of 9/11 has diminished, and the threat to America and her allies abroad has increased. The tragedy of post-9/11 is proving to be even greater than that of 9/11 itself, and the recommendations of the Commission will do either nothing or very little to ameliorate the situation.

*F. R. Tangherlini*
San Diego

## The Heat Is On

Cheers to Lewis H. Lapham for exposing the New York Police Department's unconstitutional anti-protester tactics ["Crowd Control," Notebook, October]. I spent the greater part of last year—with fifteen of my colleagues—in a lengthy court case for an act of civil disobedience carried out shortly after the invasion of Iraq. At our sentencing, the assistant district attorney recommended harsh penalties (including jail time) and referred to some of us as "chronic protesters." Apparently, the state of New York now considers dissent a pathological disease to be suppressed lest it spread any further. If that is so, let us all work to make sure a cure is never found.

*Erica Weitzman*
Brooklyn

## Go Canada!

I found it fascinating, and rather amusing, that Mark Greif finds public jogging so distasteful and invasive ["The Fit and the Dead," Readings, September]. "With his speed and narcissistic intensity," Greif writes, "the runner corrupts the space of walking, thinking, talking, and everyday contact. . . . He opposes solitude and solitude by publicly sweating on them."

Here in Vancouver, joggers abound, day and night, solitary and in packs. I cannot say that I have ever been bothered by one of them, even when they come en masse to my coffee shop, pull all the tables together, and make the chairs sweaty.

They seem happy enough. And anyway, what athletic endeavor is more natural, more ancient, more intrinsic to human nature, than flight?

*Bryant Ibbetson*
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

## Don't Cry for Guy, Argentina

Guy Davenport, whose own translation of *Carmina Archilochos: Fragments of Archilochos* was a heady inspiration to me in my college days nearly forty years ago, is entitled to his opinion about Jorge Luis Borges and his biographer, Edwin Williamson ["A Form of Incomprehension," Reviews, September]. But Davenport's sweeping disqualification of Argentinian literature struck me as overly flippant.

May I suggest that Davenport turn his attention to the works of Ernesto Sábato (*Sobre héroes y tumbas*, *Abaddón el exterminador*, and *El túnel*), an often overlooked monument of world literature, before closing his file on South America with finality?

*P. J. Blumenthal*
Munich, Germany

I realize that Guy Davenport is merely aping V. S. Naipaul in his disdain for all things Argentine. He has, however, raised a troubling issue for me. In twenty-seven years of poking around the Argentine Republic and sipping *mate* from La Quiaca to Ushuaia, I have

onstrated against the military, read
Cortázar and *Nunca más* by the
pfire, sung "*Como la cigarra*" by
llelight, closed out a bar in Pata-
ia reminiscing about the Seven-
with a former Montonero, and
ed existentialism with a Peronist
on organizer who runs a museum of
erflies. But I have never seen a
e fight! It horrifies me that I have
ehow missed what for Davenport
e quintessential expression of Ar-
tine manhood.

*ur M. Shapiro*
is, Calif.

## adle of Privatization

Naomi Klein's "Baghdad Year
" [Report, September] is a rivet-
account of the Bush Administra-
's agenda in Iraq. She has woven
cause/effect relationship between
conservative ideology and Iraqi
urgency into a complete and
lling canvas. The citizens of
erica, after all, have a right to
w that their blood and resources
being spent for the purpose of
cing Iraq on the international
tion block. Thank you for bring-
this brilliant work to light.

*yne Greenberg*
rner Robins, Ga.

## e Terror Ticket

Perhaps Luke Mitchell intended
e Osama Endorsement" [Briefings,
ober] to be funny, but the subject
ossible terrorist attacks against the
ited States hardly lends itself
umor.

n light of the countless newspa-
and magazine articles published
the situation in the Middle East,
chell should know that terrorists
ve on unequal battles and that
h's invasion of Iraq has turned
re and more Muslims into fanat-
ready to defend their religion.

t ought to be clear to any in-
med person that Osama bin
len and his ilk desire more at-
ks, and would consider Bush's re-
tion the best gift they could re-
ve from the United States.

*ry B. Vant Hull*
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# NOTEBOOK

## R & D

*By Lewis H. Lapham*

*country without its czar is like a vil- without an idiot.*

—Russian proverb

The documentary play *Guantánamo: nor Bound to Defend Freedom* serves a dispatch from the Cuban intern- nt camps in which the American vernment currently holds captive eral hundred presumed terrorists of ab nationality and descent, and very ly in the performance I saw last Oc- er in New York it occurred to me t I had been extended the privilege watching a Pentagon experiment h laboratory animals. On the ngth of the play's intelligence and m what I knew of its provenance e script based on evidence gathered British journalists and London il-rights lawyers), I could assume t the association of ideas was delib- te and the irony intended. The prin- al actors appear as "detainees" ssed in orange prison uniforms and ced on a desolate stage furnished h a few tables and chairs, four nar- bunks, and four steel cages; for the st part silent and inert, they wait to moved, like so many numbered ce, into another maze, tent, inter- ation booth, or isolation cell. When mitted to speak about the circum- nces of their arrest or the terms of ir confinement, they use the words en in legal pleadings, press reports, l private letters from three British zens, law-abiding but inopportune- Muslim, who found themselves ong the herd of suspects rounded by American military authorities rching the world for allies of Osama Laden during the months subse- nt to the overthrow of the Taliban Afghanistan.

The play doesn't quarrel with a civilized society's right to defend itself—if necessary, by whatever means come most expediently to hand—against enemies both real and imagined; neither does it doubt the possibility that at least some of the suspects brought to Guantánamo Bay provided information forestalling the destruction of a bridge in Maryland or the poisoning of a reservoir in Oklahoma. The play doesn't address the realpolitik of the war on terror; it considers the moral consequences—not the grand strategy of what President Bush defines as the "monumental struggle of good versus evil" but the brutalization of the participants on both sides of the interrogation, both ends of the rope. The actors speak as detainees who happen to be innocent—not surprisingly, because, as was made clear with the publication of *The 9/11 Commission Report*, our American intelligence agencies find it hard to distinguish one Muslim from another, to tell the difference between a jihadist mullah, an Iraqi politician, an Afghan warlord, and a Syrian bicycle thief. Among the inmates held at Guantánamo Bay for nearly three years, only four have been formally charged with a crime, apparently no more than twelve or maybe twenty guilty of some sort of a connection to Al Qaeda. The Supreme Court last June granted the detainees the right to inquire about the reasons for their imprisonment, but the questions of procedure have yet to be resolved. In what legal jurisdiction do the hearings take place, with or without advice of counsel, under whose rules of engagement? The shuffling and reshuffling of paper could continue for another three years; in the meantime the voices on the stage try to account for their presence in a void.

Their joint and corroborating testimony gathers its force from the gradual accumulation of small and wretched fact. No grandiloquent statements about man's inhumanity to man, no artful turns of phrase or plot, little else except plain narrative and the bearing of collective witness—one man arrested for no discernible cause while making a religious pilgrimage to Pakistan, another man shipped across the Atlantic Ocean in a freight container with the cargo of his dead and dying companions. Slowly and against its will, the audience comes to learn what sort of prison it is that America, "honor bound to defend freedom," has created in the image of its own fear on a distant Caribbean shore: a system of justice operating outside the bounds of national or international law, similar in its charter to one of the Enron Corporation's special-purpose entities, accountable to no authority other than the word of the American president and the whim of the American military command, which acts as warden, prosecutor, defense counsel, jury, judge, and, if deemed appropriate, executioner.

Classified as enemy combatants and therefore ineligible for the rights accorded prisoners of war, denied access to a lawyer or a writ of habeas corpus, the detainees fall into the category of a subhuman species available to experiment—kept in cages; exposed to deafening noise, unmuzzled dogs, extreme temperatures of heat and cold; stripped naked and searched for contraband in their teeth and anal cavities; deprived of food, medicine, water,

and sleep; seldom allowed to stand or move unless shackled with the weight of chains.

First staged in London at about the same time that the photographs from Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison were making the rounds of the print and broadcast media, the play attracted a good deal of notice in the periodical press, and before seeing the off-Broadway production I was well enough acquainted with the Bush Administration's approach to suspected terrorists—in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as at Camps X-Ray, Romeo, and Delta, praised by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as safe, healthy, and humane environments in "beautiful, sunny" Cuba—to know that the dramatization was faithful to the facts. What I didn't expect was the shift in perspective introduced by the notion of a Pentagon research project, and on leaving the theater I found myself wondering about the purpose of the experiments. What was it that our inspectors general were trying to find out, and why so many of them? Who was learning what from whom?

The large number of intelligence operatives (regular Army as well as CIA) sent to Cuba since the winter of 2002 to interrogate the same few hundred inmates suggests the need for a training facility where Christian officers and gentlemen might practice the art of extracting information from hardened infidels, improve their technique, overcome their feelings of revulsion and disgust. I can understand why it might be important to learn how to translate a scream in Arabic into a word in English, or useful to note the precise degrees of humiliation and degradation that a human being can be made to suffer without inducing insanity or attempted suicide, but how often must the experiments be repeated? Surely at some point the answers cease to be of interest. The research staff presumably looks for something other than fantastic guesses as to the whereabouts of Mullah Omar, and so I'm obliged to think that our apprentice Grand Inquisitors have more far-reaching questions in mind—not questions about the phobias of captive Muslims (how do they react to sexual insults, Big Mac cheeseburgers, and giant spiders?) but questions about the character and quality of free Americans.

Is it [illegible] to rule the world from the [illegible] empire, how willing are the American people to [illegible] perhaps even to admire and applaud, the cruelties necessary to the maintenance of so great a glory? Is it possible to construct the moral equivalent of a toxic-waste dump in which to dispose of our sentimental squeamishness? If the government chooses to hang its prisoners by their testicles or thumbs, must the authorities in Washington anticipate objections from CBS News? From the Catholic and evangelical churches? From the Supreme Court? If so, how strong an objection, and can it be silenced with the antidote of fear? If a Marine colonel makes a mistake with an experiment involving two Syrian terrorists, a fishing boat, and a shark, will a feature editor at the *Washington Post* award the story seven paragraphs or one?

Different answers to the questions imply different versions of the American future, and as I considered the various possibilities in the light of the next day's newspaper reports arriving from Israel, Afghanistan, Russia, and Iraq, I noticed that it was hard to find much deviation between the reasons given by American generals for the bombing of Iraqi civilians in Fallujah and those given by Israeli generals for bombing Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip; or to make a clear distinction between Vladimir Putin's belief that too much freedom threatens the stability of the Russian state and the Bush Administration's aversion to any and all forms of constitutional law. Given the money and effort that the United States has assigned over the last half-century to the shaping of Russian and Israeli politics, it shouldn't come as a surprise that both countries now serve us as laboratories in which we might study various strains of anti-democratic government and cultivate socioeconomic organisms adaptable to the totalitarian climate of the new American imperium.

At present the most advanced research is being done in Iraq, much of it apparently directed toward a fuller and more complete understanding of the necessity for a state of perpetual war. George Orwell identified the importance of the topic in the novel *19*[illegible] Adolf Hitler conducted extensive field studies in both Eastern and Western Europe; America and the Soviet Union cooperated for forty years in a joint experiment with the waging of synthetic war, words substituted for deeds, prolonged artillery bombardment replaced with the constant threat of nuclear annihilation. The prior research need not be discounted or ignored, but in Baghdad at the moment we have access to a near limitless supply of laboratory specimens and a rare chance, literally God-given to President George W. Bush, to add to our store of knowledge.

The senior managers of the Bush Administration can be counted upon to acknowledge the truth of George Orwell's dictum that "ignorance is strength," but will the Iraqi people verify the corollary finding that "freedom is slavery"? For how many weeks or months, and with what degree of religious zeal, will a true believer in the promise of Islam persist in his or her refusal to pledge allegiance to the American flag? To accept the word of Christ? Can our own soldiers be relied upon to decimate the ranks of our enemies with the same reptilian calm that the historians ascribe to the legions of imperial Rome? How quickly, and with what modifications to its assembly lines, can a nominally free press be converted to the production of weapons-grade propaganda?

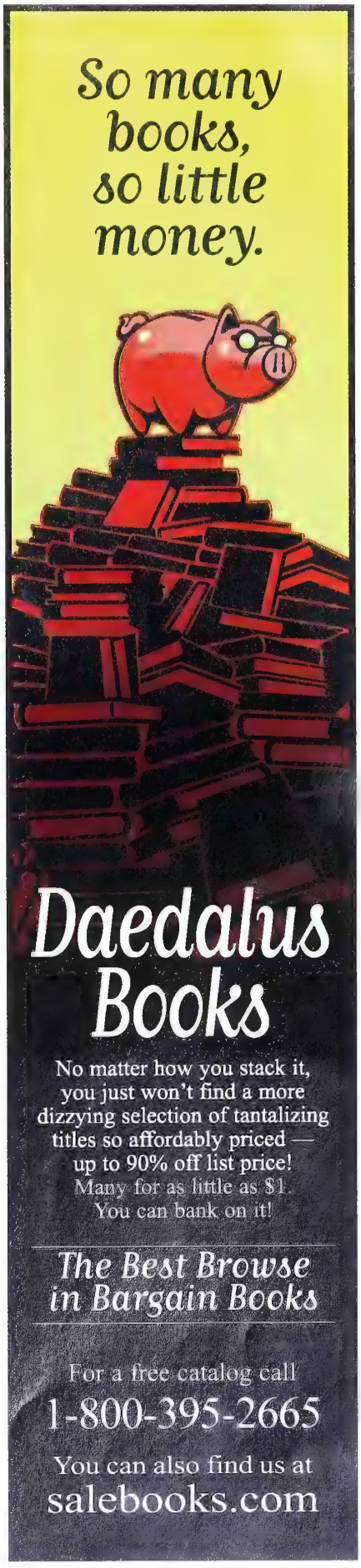
The scale of the federal program in Iraq should yield results well worth the cost of the undertaking, but it cannot answer all the questions, and in some areas of relative interest we will continue to depend on the experiments being performed in Israel, Afghanistan, and Russia. The Afghans test the hypothesis that an economy sustained by drug trafficking and a social order governed by a savage interpretation of the Koran can be presented to the world in the costume of democracy. Ever since its 1967 conquest of the Palestinian territories in Gaza and the West Bank, more desperate since the rising of the second intifada

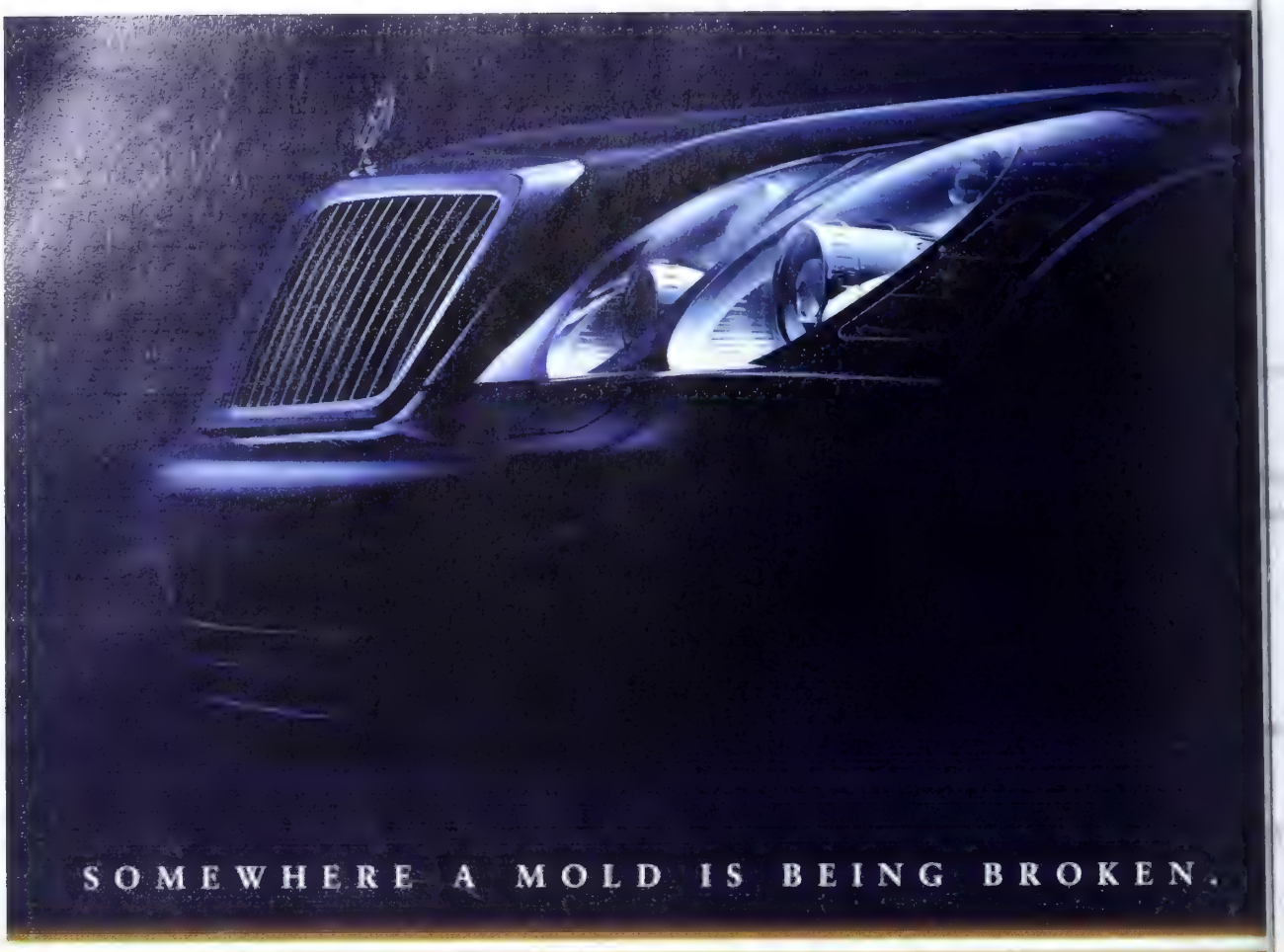
n September 2000, the Israeli ernment has been searching for and improved techniques guar- ed to control the pestilence of a ect population. In the process it developed lines of anesthetic oning, among them the theory of mptive strike and precautionary ssination, to protect its own citi- against the pains induced by an rly active conscience. Many of same arguments we have adopt- s palliatives for our own states of iety, but we have yet to learn the et of removing from the Ameri- body politic large numbers of ple deemed undesirable, danger- or impious. The Israelis are for- ate to find every antisocial trait haracter in the same enemy, and heir experiment with a wall neat- eparating the just from the unjust ht not prove immediately applic- to the American circumstance. society is too multifaceted, infil- ed by too many people of differ- races, colors, creeds, and sexual ntations. The work in Israel, ever, deserves serious considera- and careful study. An alarming ber of our most eminent politi- theorists and financial advisers see a soon arriving end not only American democracy but also to country's long-abiding economic sperity. If their premonitions of vy debt and chronic unemploy- t prove as well founded as their offshore bank accounts, how n do our ruling and possessing ses redistribute the presence of no longer working poor?

ome of the more impregnable gat- communities in the country's up- e suburbs already incorporate ele- ts of medieval-fortress architecture, they don't come fully equipped floodlights, razor wire, and readi- vailable armored vehicles; fences ng the Mexican border from Cali- ia to Texas are, in places, adequate heir purpose but not suitable to the ain along the Canadian border in nnesota and Montana. It's con- vable that we might wish to build del communities within the Unit- States that combine the theory of refugee camp at Khan Younis with design of Camps X-Ray, Romeo, Delta.

The lessons to be learned in the Russian laboratories have to do with the problems presented by a national economy fallen into the hands of thieves. During the long siege of the Cold War, Russia bankrupted itself in the attempt to compete with America's weapons industry and thus to earn promotion to the rank of superpower and the name of hegemon. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 put an end to Communism, and within a matter of months a new class of arriviste oligarchs, schooled by American bankers in the science of high-end swindle, privatized what remained of the national wealth. Now comes the question as to whether they can keep the rewards of their entrepreneurial enterprise. The Putin government, increasingly authoritarian in character and method, seeks to repatriate the assets lost to the private sector. The fledgling system of representative government has been canceled by a return to czarism, the news media have been brought obediently to heel, and among the richest captains of Russian industry and finance quite a few have been forced to depart for London and the French Riviera. Mikhail Khodorkovsky, proprietor of the Yukos oil monopoly and a man believed to be worth $15 billion, currently occupies a jail cell in Moscow not much bigger than the ones reserved for the guests of the United States Navy in Cuba.

His situation is not without interest to our own fellowship of corporate oligarchs. How much is it possible to steal, and to what degrees of economic degradation and humiliation can the general population be exposed, before a virulent outbreak of a revolutionary virus obliges even the most venal and accommodating of governments to suppress the disease with the vaccine of despotism? Judging by the strong bipartisan support for the bill passed last October by both the Senate (69–17) and the House of Representatives (280–141) granting American business interests $137 billion in tax breaks, the day of reckoning is not yet come. Even so, prudence is a virtue, and it's always wise to know when the morning plane leaves for Zurich or Dubai. ■




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# HARPER'S INDEX

Number of U.S. terrorism trials brought before a jury since September 11, 2001 : 1
Number of terrorism convictions resulting : 2
Number of them dismissed in June due to a "pattern of mistakes" by the prosecution : 2
venue generated by Halliburton under CEO Dick Cheney from business deals with Iraq under Saddam Hussein : $30,000,000
Estimated revenue generated by Halliburton last year through subsidiaries in Iran : $63,506,000
Value of the Halliburton shares owned by New York City's Fire Department Pension Fund : $3,359,095
Number of times since 2002 the city has filed a shareholders' resolution questioning the risk of doing business in Iran : 3
mber of companies in which Tom Ridge holds stock that have a contract with the Department of Homeland Security : 7
Number of overseas bullet suppliers the U.S. Army contracted with last year and this year, respectively : 1,5
Minimum number of bullets the U.S. military purchased for use this year : 1,500,000,000
Average number of bullets per Iraqi this represents : 58
Number of major weapons systems the Pentagon has under development : 77
Ratio of the original estimate of these programs' total cost to the estimate today : 1:2
io of U.S. arms dealers' campaign contributions made since January 2001 to Democrats to those made to Republicans : 1:2
Number of states with a Libertarian Party presidential candidate on the ballot last month : 48
Number with a Reform, Green, and/or Socialist Workers Party candidate on the ballot, respectively : 35,28,14
Weeks the Green Party's vice-presidential candidate spent staying in homeless shelters as part of her campaign tour : 2
Average number of clothing items an adult American acquired in 2002 : 52
Estimated average amount of textiles thrown out by each U.S. household in 2001, in pounds : 66
Percentage salary cut that Delta's CEO announced this fall that he would take through the end of the year : 100
ercentage of 30-year-old American men who were married, self-supporting fathers in 1960 and 2000, respectively : 65,31
Number of levels of executive positions in the federal government in 1960 and this year, respectively : 17,58
Total number of federal executives in each of those years : 451, 2,592
Percentage of poor Americans who lived in the suburbs in 1959 and last year, respectively : 17,39
Ratio of the number of poor Americans living in cities to the number who live in suburbs : 21:20
Number of the 20 fastest-growing U.S. counties that are coastal : 17
Number of body bags a New Orleans suburb secured for this year's hurricane season : 10,000
imated number of Britons sent government warnings last fall of their increased chance of having mad cow disease : 6,000
inimum number of countries with a greater capacity to produce nuclear weapons than Iraq at the time of the U.S. invasion : 35
Ratio of U.S. spending on Iraq each week to total U.S. aid to Sudan since February 2003 : 2:1
Minimum number of tribes and ethnic groups in Sudan's Darfur region : 80
Chances that an adult male citizen of Pitcairn Island has been arrested for a sex-related crime this year : 2 in 5
Minimum number of those arrested who are direct descendants of mutineer Fletcher Christian : 4
Estimated average price of a female newborn in a Bulgarian infant-selling ring busted this summer : $6,000
Estimated average price of a male newborn : $18,000
Average black-market price in Baghdad of a DVD showing the beheading of a foreigner or Iraqi "collaborator" : 50¢
ice of the bottle of champagne a New York club requires patrons to buy in order to use a diamond-encrusted table : $5,000
Minutes of weightlessness that Virgin Galactic passengers will experience on suborbital space flights in 2007 : 5
"Degrees of freedom" accorded each eyebrow of an "Emotion Expression" robot under development : 4 (see page 28)

*Figures cited are the latest available as of October 2004. Sources are listed on page 79.*
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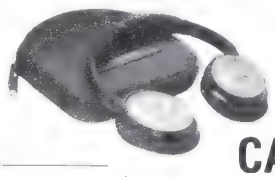
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# READINGS

[Analysis]

## A PUPPET FOR ALL SEASONS

*By Susan Watkins, from the July/August* New Left Review. *Watkins is the editor of* NLR.

*His Majesty's Government and I are in the same boat and must sink or swim together . . . if you wish me and your policy to succeed, it is folly to damn me permanently in the public eye by making me an obvious puppet.*

King Faisal I to the British high commissioner, Mesopotamia, August 17, 1921

Rarely has a passage of powers been so furtive. The ceremony on June 28—held two days ahead of schedule, deep within Baghdad's fortified Green Zone—lasted just ten minutes, with thirty U.S. and Iraqi officials present. Outside the concrete stockade, the military realities have remained the same: an occupation force of 160,000 U.S.-led troops, an additional army of commercial security guards, and jumpy ill-equipped local police units. Before departing, the Coalition Provisional Authority set in place a parallel government structure of commissioners and inspectors general who, elections notwithstanding, will control Iraq's chief ministries for the next five years. The largest U.S. embassy in the world will dominate Baghdad, with regional "hubs" planned in Mosul, Kirkuk, Hilla, and Basra. Most of the billions in reconstruction money that has been contracted so far is being spent on American military bases. The U.N. has resolved that the country's oil revenues will continue to be deposited in the U.S.-dominated Development Fund, again for the next five years. The Allawi government will have no authority to reallocate contracts signed by the CPA, largely with foreign companies that remain above the law of the land. A majority of current Iraqi cabinet ministers are themselves U.S. or U.K. citizens.

Iyad Allawi, hailed in the Western media as the blunt, independent-minded leader the country needs, is an appropriate appointment as prime minister. Little secret is made of the fact that, like his counterpart Hamid Karzai in Afghanistan, he has been a paid CIA agent for many years; such a record is no longer considered something to hide. Allawi's career to date has more than qualified him for his present role. Iraqis recall him as a Baath enforcer in London student circles of the 1970s, with a bogus medical degree conferred by the regime for services rendered. According to his former colleague Dirgam Kadhim, Allawi was simultaneously dealing with MI6 (a branch of the British intelligence services) and running a Mukhabarat death squad for Saddam's faction of the Baath, targeting dissenters in Europe—until falling foul of the party himself by the late '70s. After a few years in hiding he resurfaced in Amman, co-founding the Iraqi National Accord with Salih Omar Ali al-Tikriti, said to be a former supervisor of public hangings in Baghdad. The INA specialized in recruiting military and intelligence defectors; the bomb blasts attributed to it in the mid-90s—one in a crowded theater, another killing schoolchildren on a bus—were purportedly

"proficiency tests" set by the CIA. Duly persuaded of the INA's merits, the agency provided funding for Allawi's botched coup attempt of 1996 that, uncovered by Saddam, resulted in more than a hundred executions. He was subsequently responsible for passing on the intelligence that prompted Tony Blair's claim of forty-five-minute WMD delivery systems, and pinpointed Saddam's supposed bunker for bombardment at the start of the invasion.

With the U.S. occupation established, Allawi was put on the Governing Council in charge of security. His campaign for the post of prime minister—his lobbying firm spent over $340,000—was naturally run in Washington, not Baghdad. Once appointed, he embarrassed his masters by threatening to proclaim martial law before his inauguration. His colleague Ghazi al-Yawar, Iraq's new president, made a comparable show of independence by demurring from Bush's proposal to blow up Abu Ghraib: it would be a pity to demolish the prison when the Americans had spent so much money on it. Yawar, who was running an obscure telecoms firm in Saudi Arabia when the United States established contact with him before the invasion, began dressing up in Shammar tribal robes as soon as he was put on the Governing Council, perhaps on a tip from Karzai in Afghanistan.

That it took Washington more than a year to erect such a threadbare front—Karzai was parachuted into place within a matter of weeks—is testimony to the strength of the Iraqi resistance. How should such a force be gauged? In June 1940 the French Army, like its modern Iraqi counterpart, collapsed in the face of the German *Blitzkrieg* without a serious fight, and within a month French National Assembly deputies gathered at Vichy had voted, 569–80, in favor of a collaborationist regime under Marshal Pétain. The Vichy government was swiftly recognized by the United States and other powers, and the majority of non-Jewish French settled down to life under the occupation. It was two years before the maquis began to offer serious resistance. Elsewhere in Europe, the pattern was similar. The Germans were efficient in organizing indigenous support: Quisling in Norway, the Croatian Ustashi and SS-trained Bosnian and Kosovar regiments in Yugoslavia, the Iron Guard in Romania, the Arrow Cross in Hungary. In their classical form, twentieth-century resistance movements were slow to constitute themselves, and those that did appear nearly always had external state support. The Allies' supplies were crucial to the anti-Nazi underground of Continental Europe, and the general pattern was much the same in Asia and Africa. Chinese weaponry was a condition of Vietminh victory, as Egyptian and Tunisian backing was for the FLN in Algeria. Typically, such foreign help functioned in conjunction with an already existing political leadership and party network with a potential for hegemony at a national level, as with the local Communist movements in France, Italy, or Indochina.

The resistance that has emerged over the past eighteen months to the U.S. occupation in Iraq fits none of these categories. It began early, the first armed attacks erupting in May 2003, within weeks of Baghdad's fall. It escalated over the summer, as demonstrations and street protests were regularly fired upon. The initial hit-and-miss harrying of the occupation force had developed by August 2003 into assaults on strategic military and diplomatic targets such as the Jordanian embassy and the U.N. compound. By November of that year, U.S. forces were suffering heavier losses, with the insurgents bringing down helicopters. Vicious reprisals led to a further escalating spiral. Like any other military occupation, the Anglo-American regime has been one of sanctioned murder and torture, and the resistance to it has been similarly savage. Suicide raids, car bombs, and mortars have sown havoc in the big cities, taking a terrible toll. By mid-October, U.S. forces were contending with an average of sixty-five attacks every day. Increasingly sophisticated assaults on pipelines and pumping stations (more than 2,000 in the past year) have cut oil exports for weeks at a time. What triggered most alarm for Western and Arab governments, however, was the simultaneous rebellion that broke out across the Shia south and Sunni center in April 2004, the joint Shia–Sunni convoy from Baghdad to Fallujah, and other prefigurations of a national resistance leadership—Washington's great fear. Meanwhile, the occupation's own polls measured the solid bank of popular support behind the fighters.

Externally, the Iraqi resistance faces a front of unprecedented official hostility—a global unanimity unimaginable in any previous age. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546, passed in June, extends unqualified support to the U.S.-appointed Allawi regime, conferring the full legitimacy of the "international community" on its collection of old CIA hands and carpetbaggers. Explaining that the country—lacking an army, and with a transparent absence of WMDs—"continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security," it authorizes the occupying force to take "all necessary measures"; i.e., whatever American commanders deem fit. All U.N. members are, of course, bluntly prohibited from supplying arms or matériel to the Iraqi people. France and Germany offered the comedy of a request that sovereign control over the occupier's army be entrusted to the Iraqi façade it has



*"Erewhon (Denniston)," a photograph by Jane and Louise Wilson, was exhibited last month at 303 Gallery, in New York City.*

manufactured—only to be told by Allawi's foreign minister that Paris and Berlin should not be "more Iraqi than the Iraqis," who desired only that the U.S. command "keep them informed."

Politically, the Iraqi resistance has been heterogeneous and fragmentary, lacking the established party networks crucial to most previous anti-occupation movements. It includes former Baathists, secular liberals and social democrats, multi-hued mosque-based networks, and splits from the collaborationist Iraqi Communist and Dawa parties; the most authoritative reports suggest surprisingly low figures for international jihadist involvement. Ideologically, nationalism and Islamism—"for God and Iraq"—are the most potent calls, but there are elements of Third World anti-imperialism and pan-Arabism too. It remains to be seen whether these groups can establish some equivalent of a national liberation front, to unite religious and secular groups around the central demand for the expulsion of all foreign troops.

Externally isolated and internally unsynchronized, the Iraqi maquis nevertheless possesses a number of distinct resources. First, strong social networks: resilient clan and extended-family connections; cohesive neighborhood quarters; and mosques that offer a local sanctuary and gathering place, unimaginable in occupied Europe. Arab writers have pointed out the attendant weaknesses of these forms: particularism, local rivalry, lack of coordination, the treachery or opportunism of unaccountable demagogues, a fringe of criminality thriving on the

[Strategy]

# COOP D'ETAT

*From a recently declassified paper written for the British Security Service on August 28, 1945.*

Defensively, this department has investigated cases of suspected illicit use of pigeons. We instigated a watch by posts on the southern and southeastern coasts for any pigeons flying out to sea. We started a Falconry Unit, with two falconers and trained falcons. Whilst we never brought down an enemy bird we did demonstrate that we could bring down any pigeon that crossed the area we were patrolling.

Just prior to D-Day, all the fanciers living near the southern coasts were asked to assist in a scheme to decoy into their lofts any enemy birds: they were asked to organize the times at which they let their birds out for their daily flights so that there were always some birds in the air to attract tired enemy birds to join them.

We also arranged a little plan to hinder the use of pigeons in Belgium and Holland by "contaminating" their lofts. Copying the markings of captured enemy pigeons, we had a number of exact replicas made and put them onto English pigeons. We then released the birds—free and without parachutes—from aircraft over Belgium and Holland. Far from home and lost, they would find their way—as homing pigeons always do—to some loft, and as all lofts were enemy-controlled, it would be a German loft. There they would be taken in, and if used for message carrying would of course go astray. Sooner or later the Germans would discover they had been fooled and they would have to call in all their pigeons to check which were the impostors. Whilst they were doing this they would be unable to use any of their pigeon services.

At the present moment Europe is disordered and stunned, but as things settle down, it is possible that resistance forces may emerge and that such forces might use pigeons for clandestine communication, and we feel that Intelligence Services should have a pigeon loft at their disposal. At this loft, experimental work could be carried out (such as the release of pigeons from new and faster types of aircraft), and Intelligence could be kept abreast of any new developments. We feel that it would not be difficult to find a pigeoneer who would be willing to take on such a job for the interest of the thing, and without remuneration.

social breakdown. Yet within this fluid, vocal, and highly mobilized environment, leaders can be forced into taking more resolute stands to retain the loyalty of their supporters.

Second, unlike previous anti-occupation movements, the Iraqi resistance has at its disposal sufficient explosives to harry the occupiers for years to come, in the dumps of conventional weaponry (rocket launchers, artillery shells, etc.) accrued by the previous regime. Shock-resistant, these weapons have to be painstakingly dismantled, one by one; an attempt to blow up an ammunition stack simply scatters it, unexploded. The United States has only a few hundred engineers in Iraq capable of the task.

Third, the natural dislike of any people for a foreign occupation has been reinforced by the stark deterioration of social conditions since the Anglo-American invasion. In much of the countryside, the long-term agrarian crisis—salination, pump failure, silted canals—has worsened as agribusiness imports increase. Rising rural unemployment has swelled the slum populations of Basra and Baghdad. Much of Iraq's industrial sector—already skewed toward arms production during the Iran-Iraq war, then targeted by Western bombs in the 1990s—faces not privatization but closure, putting a skilled workforce on the street. Indeed, two thirds of the pre-invasion labor force may now be unemployed. A deepening social crisis is concealed behind the daily military communiqués, and the occupation presence provides a tangible target for Iraqis' frustrations.

Finally, the resistance can draw upon vivid historical memories of triumphant battles against the last imperial occupier. The modern Iraqi nation is a creation of the struggle against British colonialism, after London seized Mesopotamia from Istanbul in 1917. The countrywide uprising in the summer of 1920 forced Britain to retreat from direct administration on the Delhi model, and its solution—"ruling without governing," or "exercising control through an ostensibly independent native government"—was to set up a monarchy dependent on British arms for survival and backed by a League of Nations mandate authorizing all necessary measures. The British high commissioner remained the highest power in the land, and, when the mandate expired, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty guaranteed British control over Iraq's foreign policy, seaport, railways, airbases, and, in times of war, security forces. Compliant local notables signed on to the treaty, but the majority of the population rejected it. When resistance broke out in 1922, the British high commissioner arrested political leaders, banned nationalist parties, and famously subdued rebellious tribes with punitive bombing and mustard gas.

But despite London's efforts to foster conservative landlordism in the countryside, packing

tame national assemblies with loyal sheikhs, urban social forces could not be held down indefinitely. In April 1941 the pro-British regent, the crown prince, and the prime minister were forced to flee abroad when pan-Arab officers with mass nationalist backing seized power and abrogated the wartime provisos of the treaty. The U.K. had to reoccupy the country to restore imperial control, returning the crown prince to Baghdad in a British tank. In January 1948 popular anger at the recycling of the treaty and at the British role in Palestine set off an insurrectionary movement in the capital, mingling middle-class students and nationalists with communist railway workers and slum dwellers. Finally, after a decade of suppressed revolts, a coup toppled the monarchy with the backing of both Communists and Baathists (at that time a small party with under a thousand members). Huge crowds clogged the streets to block any counter-revolution as the Republic of Iraq was proclaimed by a left-nationalist government and the door to national independence and social reform was flung open at last.

Iraqis are well tutored in these battles, the ABCs of their modern history. But the past rarely offers exact analogies, and to view contemporary events through its lens highlights differences as well as similarities between the old imperial occupation and the new. Militarily and politically, the machinery of American power in Iraq today is far more formidable than Britain's was. With 160,000 troops at his disposal, Ambassador John Negroponte has a greater vice-regal command of violence than the British high commissioner ever possessed. American control of Iraqi harbors, airports, and security forces—not to speak of courts, education, trade, finance, media, and foreign policy—has been given the U.N. seal, with a force of "international law" going well beyond the bilateral Anglo-Iraqi treaty. Washington's coffers are deeper than London's ever were, and today's oil revenues were undreamed of in the 1920s. The capacity of the occupation to buy consent is far higher. It can also hope to rely on the sheer exhaustion and dislocation of life after March 2003 to create a longing for some semblance of normalcy, under new arrangements that promise to transfer, however nominally, elements of sovereignty back to the country.

It would be a mistake therefore to think that nothing has changed since L. Paul Bremer flew out and Negroponte flew in. As in the German-occupied Europe of 1940–41, native collaborationist regimes typically offer some initial degree of relief after the humiliation of foreign invasion, as well as lucrative business or administrative positions to servants of the new order. The puppet government in Baghdad today enjoys far less autonomy than Pétain's regime in Vichy—in that respect it is closer to Quisling's in Oslo—but it has a basis of support from an array of privileged groups in the post-invasion landscape—not just carpetbaggers on CIA or MI6 payrolls but technocrats eyeing career opportunities, a swath of the semi-expatriate bourgeoisie and the sanction-busting nouveaux riches, traditionally collaborationist rural families, and the large Kurdish population in the north. Crucially, the regime has also enjoyed the tolerance of the Shia hierarchy around Ayatollah al-Sistani, airlifted to London for the duration of last August's siege of Najaf.

All this, however, must contend with the Arab population's hatred for the American occupation itself. The foreign hand is everywhere visible in the new Iraq. Even in the north, where U.S. troops are scarcely needed, the Kurdish leadership has installed a network of Israeli intelligence agents and hit squads, the culmination of its disastrous record of political misjudgments. If its client regime is not to be permanently associated with American bombers, tanks, and jails, the United States urgently needs an effective native enforcement body. Yet, despite the level of unemployment, enlistments are still lagging far below planned figures, the loyalty of new recruits remains in doubt, and Allawi's attempts to brigade or buy over former Baath officers have not yet produced any better results.

On the ideological front there is little more light. Under rules endorsed by U.N. Resolution 1546, the January 2005 election (if it is held) will allow Iraqis to choose candidates selected by the U.S. embassy for a "transitional" administration with strictly limited powers, charged with drafting a constitution for a further, equally restricted ballot by January 2006. The hand-picked, thousand-member consultative conference convened in August proved a complete fiasco, with Allawi's thugs ejecting all critics.

Internationally, the regime and its masters look forward to strengthening their position by planting the U.N. flag once again in Iraqi soil, but so far the Secretariat has not dared to return to Baghdad, with good reason. On conservative estimates, some 300,000 children under five died from disease and malnutrition under the U.N. sanctions regime of the 1990s, while the Secretariat skimmed administration fees of over $1 billion. In 1998 the U.N. contracts committee awarded the Oil for Food Programme contract for monitoring Iraqi imports (of often rotted food and diluted medicines) to Cotecna Inspection, a company that employed Kofi Annan's son Kojo as a consultant throughout the bidding process. In June, U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, a leading member of the junta that canceled elections in Algeria in 1992 and broker of

the Karzai regime in Afghanistan, rubber-stamped Bremer's selection of members of the Governing Council for reincarnation as ministers of the Interim Government; but, duty performed, could not wait to get out. When they do return, U.N. functionaries will need a large private army of their own to protect them.

Formally speaking, the Anglo-American invasion has been stripped of its original pretexts. There were no weapons of mass destruction. Human-rights violations have branded the liberators. The need to bring democracy to Iraq, let alone the rest of the Middle East, has become less pressing. It is the strength of the Iraqi resistance—and it alone—that has led to widespread uneasiness in the Western establishments. Washington think tanks have been buzzing about exit strategies, estimating the costs to U.S. political credibility ("high, or unacceptable?"), assessing "indicators for withdrawal." The American electorate has turned against the war: a fluctuating majority of voters now think the invasion was a mistake.

Yet those who shook their heads at the preemptive proclamations of the 2002 National Security Strategy have been strangely unwilling to see it founder. With the upsurge of resistance in Iraq has come a flood of liberal-imperialist advice on how to run the occupation better. Joseph Nye laments the failure of American TV channels to beam U.S. soft power into the Arab world. Anthony Cordesman offers more effective interrogation methods than those practiced at Abu Ghraib. Michael Ignatieff, after deploring the painful moral juxtapositions of torture images that sullied even Reagan's funeral, warns that America "cannot abdicate its responsibility."

From those who opposed the Anglo-American invasion in 2003 on the grounds that it lacked U.N. legitimation, or that sanctions were doing the job, there has been, understandably, a deafening silence about the future of the occupation. For many, opposition to U.S. policy in Iraq has been reduced to anathematizing Bush. But good as it would be to see the Bush Administration punished at the polls, hopes that Kerry would do more than repackage current policies in the Middle East are futile. Bush has already implemented every step of his challenger's program (NATO, U.N., multinational conferences). Indeed, Robert Kagan has suggested that a Democratic administration is the necessary next step in consolidating the 2002 National Security Strategy: "It is important for the Democrats to own the war on terrorism and not simply be the opposition. Also, we would have a fresh start with the Europeans and other allies, though they would quickly be disillusioned to learn that Kerry wouldn't be that different from Bush in some respects." In other words, the Bush revolution will have succeeded in producing its heir.

Regardless of which multimillionaire sits in the White House, the reality is that, so long as hard blows continue to be inflicted by the resistance on the occupying army and its clients, domestic support for the recolonization of Iraq will drain away. The same holds true of Europe, where Paris and Berlin have predictably hastened to patch up their relations with Washington and approved NATO engagement to support its Baghdad regime; in the case of Jacques Chirac, sealing the pact with the Franco-American invasion of Haiti and the U.N.-backed overthrow of the constitutional government there. The disagreements that in the spring of 2003 supposedly threatened the Atlantic alliance have been ceremoniously buried in the Normandy sands, in County Clare, and in Istanbul. Washington's military-imperialist thrust into central Eurasia, at first deplored by right-minded pillars of the status quo as an overreaching adventure, has become the basis of a new world consensus: the hegemon must not be allowed to fail. Such unanimity, however, does not alter the fact that the U.S.-led forces have no business in Iraq, or that the Iraqi people have every right to drive them out.

[Diagnosis]

# THE TELLY OF THE BEAST

*From an interview with Father Gabriele Amorth, honorary president of the International Association of Exorcists and the most senior exorcist for the Vatican. The interview was published on February 10 in the Italian newspaper* Roma One, *which had previously reported on a series of mysterious electrical fires in the small town of Canneto di Caronia, in Sicily. Translated from the Italian by Marilyn Krieger.*

*Father Amorth, flames appear for no reason, residents are forced to leave their homes, and experts grope in the dark. What is happening in Caronia?*

This is what happens when the devil enters the lives of those who permit him to enter. Someone may be playing with black or white magic, and that is Satan's preferred point of entry. Occultism has always been widespread and at the moment it is particularly in vogue. Today's

# ALL HYBRIDS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.



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*A video still (#42) from* JerUSAlem, *by Christopher Bucklow, published in* Guest, *a book of his photographs released last month by powerHouse Books*

world, where a judge dares to order the removal of crucifixes in classrooms, has abandoned God.

*What should the authorities do?*

The first thing is to call a priest. This very day, the parish priest should bless all the houses where the paranormal events took place. If nothing else occurs, that would prove it was the presence of Evil. If the phenomena continue, then an exorcist must intervene. He alone is able to drive away the diabolical spirits.

*I have not ever seen this on such a large scale.*

No, never. I have seen all kinds of manifestations, but I have never come across the affliction of an entire town. It is rare, but when the family of one house is possessed, the phenomenon can spread to others. The Devil strikes wherever and however he wants whenever he is given the opportunity. That is, he strikes where the presence of the Lord is weaker, or where—as I was saying—individuals engage in practices that are ill-advised.

*Why electric appliances in particular?*

It's typical. The Devil often reveals his presence through electric devices. I have seen televisions, dishwashers, washing machines, and even telephones burst into flames—in short, anything that operates electrically.

*Even chairs and mattresses went up in smoke . . .*

Sure, even non-electric materials. Let's not forget that Satan and his spirits have immense power. If I told you about the things I have encountered during my exorcisms, the movies you have seen would certainly make you laugh.

[Catechism]

## ORIGINAL SINE

*From* Precalculus for Christian Schools, *a textbook published by Bob Jones University. The book is designed to help students "conform their thinking to biblical precepts."*

Carl Friedrich Gauss first proved the *fundamental theorem of algebra*. There are many fundamental theorems: of arithmetic, calculus, and so on. These are so "fundamental" that many other theorems are derived from them. In the

Bible, there are also fundamentals, without which Christianity would not exist—the deity of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, and the inspiration of the Bible, to name a few.

***

A line can be described either by its slope (a ratio) or by its inclination (an angle). These terms describe the deviation from the horizontal, but the word *inclination* also has a nonmathematical meaning. Without Christ, man is inclined to sin. The Word of God should shape our attitudes (inclinations).

***

If you are given the length of two sides and the angle measure opposite one of those sides, you can use the law of sines to solve the triangle. However, this does not always determine a unique triangle. As a result, it is called the ambiguous case. *Ambiguous* means open to multiple interpretations. Some people say that you can interpret the Bible in any way that you want. However, there is no ambiguity in the Bible.

***

Use H = thing, S = season, T = time, and P = purpose to symbolize each of the following:

First half of Ecc. 3:1
Second half of Ecc. 3:1

***

A person is eccentric if his behavior deviates from normal. Jesus Christ expects His disciples to be eccentric, since living a Christlike life is not normal in this world (Titus 2:14). Likewise, in mathematics, conic sections are eccentric if they deviate from a circle. Eccentricity is a measure of this deviation. The eccentricity of an ellipse ($e$) is the ratio of focal distance ($c$) to the length of the semimajor axis ($a$): $e = c/a$. Since $c$ and $a$ are distances and $c < a$, the eccentricity of any ellipse is $0 < e < 1$.

***

The concept of limit can be used to illustrate an important truth. Suppose you lived eighty years and there was no life after death; your life on the earth would be $80/80 = 1 = 100\%$ of your existence. Now, let's assume that your life after death was eighty years long: your earthly life would be $80/160 = 1/2 = 50\%$ of your entire existence. If life after death were 720 years, your life here would be only $80/(80+720) = 0.1 = 10\%$. Now extend it to eternity: $\lim_{x \to \infty} 80/(80+x) = 0$. In other words, this life is very insignificant in light of eternity. It is no wonder James said that life is "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

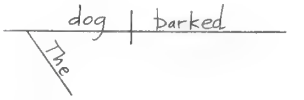
[Remembrance]

# SISTER BERNADETTE'S BARKING DOG

*By Kitty Burns Florey, from the current* Vocabula Review, *an online literary journal. Florey is the author of* Solos, *published last August by Berkeley/Penguin.*

Diagramming sentences is one of those lost skills, like darning socks or playing the sackbut, that no one seems to miss. Invented, or at least codified, in an 1877 text called *Higher Lessons in English,* by Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg, it swept through American public schools like the measles, and was embraced by teachers as the way to reform students who were engaged in "the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue" (to take Henry Higgins slightly out of context). By promoting the beautifully logical rules of syntax, diagramming would root out evils like "it's me" and "I ain't got none," until everyone wrote like Ralph Waldo Emerson, or at least James Fenimore Cooper.

In my own youth, many years after 1877, diagramming was still serious business. I learned it in the sixth grade from Sister Bernadette. I can still see her: a tiny nun with a sharp pink nose, confidently drawing a dead-straight horizontal line like a highway across the blackboard, flourishing her chalk in the air at the end of it, her veil flipping out behind her as she turned back to the class. "We begin," she said, "with a straight line." And then, in her firm and saintly script, she put words on the line, a noun and a verb—probably something like *dog barked.* Between the words she drew a short vertical slash, bisecting the line. Then she made a road that forked off at an angle—a short country lane under the word *dog*—and on it she wrote *The.*




That was it: subject, predicate, and the little modifying article that civilized the sentence—all of it made into a picture that was every bit as clear and informative as an actual portrait of a beagle in mid-woof. The thrilling part was that this was a picture not of the animal but of the words that stood for the animal and its noises. It was a representation of something both concrete and abstract. The diagram was a bit like art, a bit like mathematics. It was much more than words uttered or words written: it was a picture of language.

I was hooked. So, it seems, were many of my contemporaries. Among the myths that have attached themselves to memories of being educated in the Fifties is the notion that activities like diagramming sentences (along with memorizing poems and adding long columns of figures without a calculator) were pointless and monotonous. I thought diagramming was fun, and most of my friends who were subjected to it remember it, with varying degrees of delight. Some of us were better at it than others, but it was considered a kind of treat, a game that broke up the school day. You took a sentence, threw it against the wall, picked up the pieces, and put them together again, slotting each word into its pigeonhole. When you got it right, you made order and

[Notice]

## P.U.

*From a circular sent on August 17 to Western Michigan University staff and students from the university's Building Custodial Support Services.*

Due to the reduction of budget and human resources there has been a corresponding change in the building cleaning standards. Office, classroom, entertainment, and athletic facilities have been lowered from the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers Level 2 cleaning standard to a Level 4 or 5. In order that expectations from existing funded staffing be better understood, the following is a description of Level 5 appearance levels, excerpted from the *Custodial Staffing Guidelines for Educational Facilities*.

Level 5: Unkempt Neglect

–Floors and carpets are dull, dirty, dingy, scuffed, and/or matted. Gum, stains, dirt, dust balls, and trash are broadcast.

–Light fixtures are dirty with dust balls and flies. Many lamps are burned out.

–Trash containers and pencil sharpeners overflow. Trash containers smell sour.

–All vertical and horizontal surfaces have major accumulations of dust, dirt, smudges, and fingerprints, all of which will be difficult to remove. Lack of attention is obvious.

We thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

all the time and

was a great fan

not know that anything has ever been more exciting than diagramming sentences," she wrote in the early 1930s. "I like the feeling the everlasting feeling of sentences as they diagram themselves."

In my experience they didn't exactly diagram themselves, they had to be coaxed, if not wrestled. But—the feeling the everlasting feeling: if Gertrude Stein wasn't just riffing on the words, the love-song sound of them, she must have meant the glorious definiteness of the process. I remember loving the look of the sentences, short or long, once they were tidied into diagrams—the curious maplike shapes they made, the way the words settled primly along their horizontals like houses on a road, the way some roads were culs-de-sac and some were long meandering interstates with many exit ramps and scenic lookouts. And the clarity of it all, the ease with which—once they were laid open, their secrets exposed—those sentences could be comprehended.

On a more trivial level, part of the fun was being summoned to the blackboard to show off. There you stood, chalk in hand, while, with a glint in her eye, Sister Bernadette read off an especially tricky sentence. Compact, fastidious handwriting was an asset. A good spatial sense helped you arrange things so that the diagram didn't end up with the words jammed together against the edge of the blackboard like commuters in a subway car. The trick was to think fast, write fast, and not get rattled if you failed in the attempt.

As we became more proficient, the tasks got harder. There was great appeal in the Shaker-like simplicity of sentences like *The dog chased a rabbit* (subject, predicate, direct object), with their plain, no-nonsense diagrams:




But there were also lovable subtleties, like the way the line that set off a predicate adjective slanted back like a signpost toward the subject it modified:

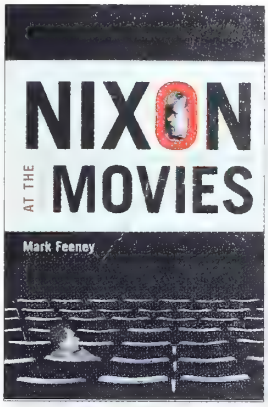



Or the thorny tussle created by diagramming a prepositional phrase modifying another prepositional phrase:

# Because even Santa's not this smart.



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"In *Nixon at the Movies*, Mark Feeney has given us a thought-provoking and truly original book—a work filled with incisive insights into a fascinating figure."
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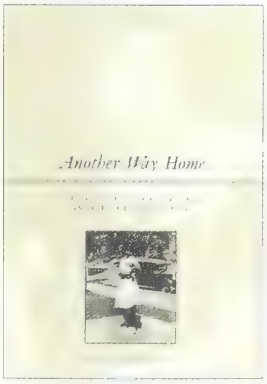
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### The Fisher King

*A Novel*

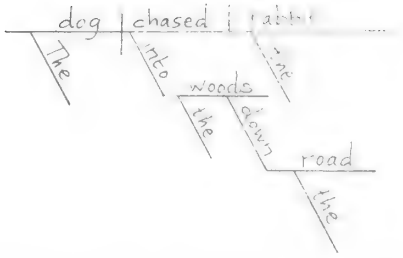
Anthony Powell

"*The Fisher King* remains a pleasure to read—knowing, faintly malicious and finally understanding. Admirers of *A Dance to the Music of Time* should love it, and anyone who has wanted to read Powell but felt daunted by that imposing edifice would be quickly rewarded by starting here."—*Washington Post*

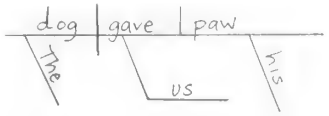
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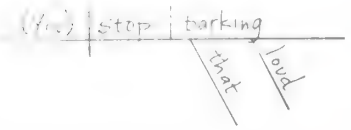
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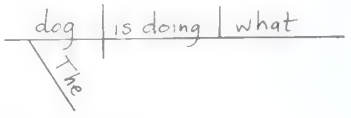

Or the elegant absence of the preposition when using an indirect object, indicated by a short road with no house on it:




The missing preposition—in this case *to*—could also be placed on that road in parentheses, but this always seemed to me a clumsy solution, right up there with explaining a pun. In a related situation,



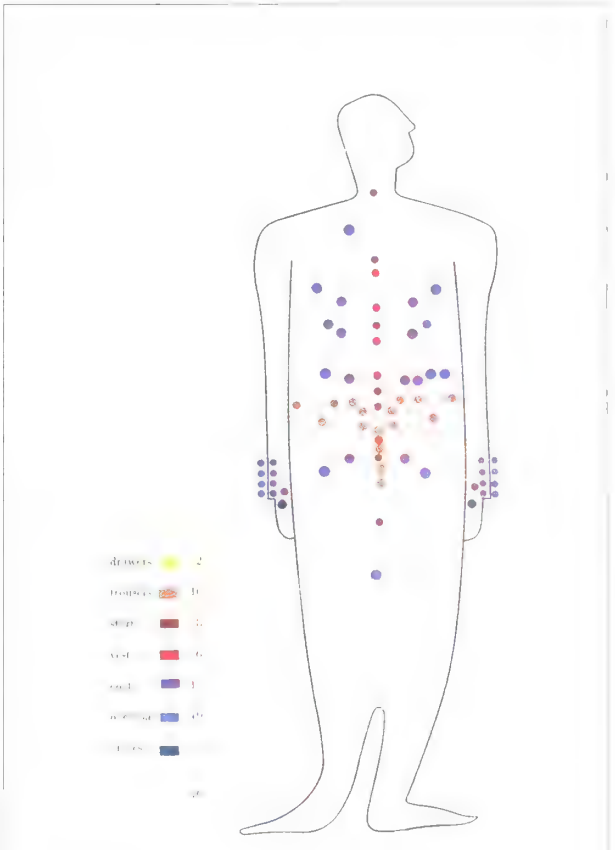

Questions were a special case. For diagramming, they had to be turned inside out, the way a sock has to be eased onto a foot: *What is the dog doing?* transformed into the more dramatic *The dog is doing what!*




Mostly we diagrammed sentences out of a grammar book, but sometimes we were assigned the task of making up our own, taking pleasure in coming up with wild Proustian wanderings that—kicking and screaming—had to be corralled, harnessed, and made to trot into the barn in neat rows.

Part of the fun of diagramming sentences was that it didn't matter what they said. The dog could bark, chew gum, play chess—in the world of diagramming, sentences weren't about meaning so much as they were about subject, predicate, object, and their various dependents or modifiers. If they were diagrammed properly, they always illustrated correct syntax, no matter how silly their content. We hung those sentences out like a wash until we understood every piece of them. We could see for ourselves the difference between *who* and *whom*. We knew what an adverb was, and we knew where in a sentence it went, and why it went there. We were aware of dangling modifiers because we could see them, quite literally, dangle.

Today, diagramming is not exactly dead, but for many years it has been in sharp decline. This is partly because diagramming sentences seems to double the task of the student, who has to learn a whole new set of rules—where does that pesky line go, and which way does it slant?—in order to illustrate a set of rules that, in fact, has been learned pretty thoroughly simply by immersion in the language from birth. It's only the subtleties that are difficult—*who* vs. *whom*, adjective vs. adverb (*I was a sick man*), and most of those come from the mostly doomed attempt, in the early days of English grammar, to stuff English into the well-made boxes of Latin and Greek, which is some-



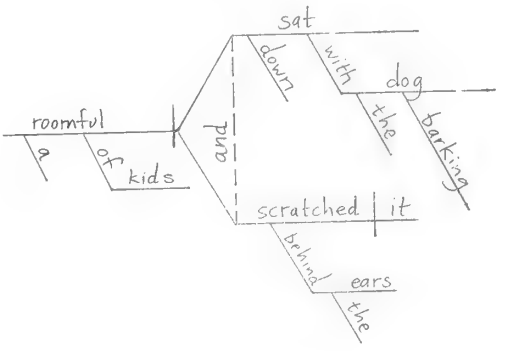
70 Buttons, *a drawing by Bernard Rudofsky, from the Fall issue of* Cabinet. *Rudofsky was a Viennese architect, designer, curator, and author of several books, including* Architecture Without Architects. *He died in 1988.*

thing like forcing a struggling cat into the carrier for a trip to the vet.

Another problem is that teachers—and certainly students—have become more willing to accept the idea that the sentences that can be popped into a diagram aren't always sentences anyone wants to write. One writer friend of mine says that she disliked diagramming because it meant "forcing sentences into conformity." And indeed language can be more supple and interesting than the patterns that perfect syntax forces on it. An attempt to diagram a sentence by James Joyce, or one by Henry James (whose style H. G. Wells compared so memorably to "a magnificent but painful hippopotamus resolved at any cost . . . upon picking up a pea"), will quickly demonstrate the limitations of Sister Bernadette's methods. Diagramming may have taught us to write more correctly—and maybe even to think more logically—but I don't think anyone would claim that it taught us to write well. And besides, any writer knows that the best way to learn to write good sentences is not to diagram them but to read them.

Still, like pocket watches and Gilbert & Sullivan operas, diagramming persists, alternately reviled and championed by linguists and grammarians. It can be found in university linguistics courses and on the websites of a few diehard enthusiasts. There are teachers' guides, should any teacher want one; it's taught in ESL courses and in progressive private schools. There's a video, *English Grammar: The Art of Diagramming Sentences,* that features a very 1950s-looking teacher named Miss Lamb working at a blackboard. There's even a computer program, apparently, that diagrams.

Sometimes, on a slow subway or a boring car trip, I mentally diagram a sentence, just as I occasionally try to remember the declension of *hic, haec, hoc* or the words to the second verse of "The Star-Spangled Banner." I have no illusions that diagramming sentences in my youth did anything for me, practically speaking. But, in an occasional fit of nostalgia, I like to bring back those golden afternoons when



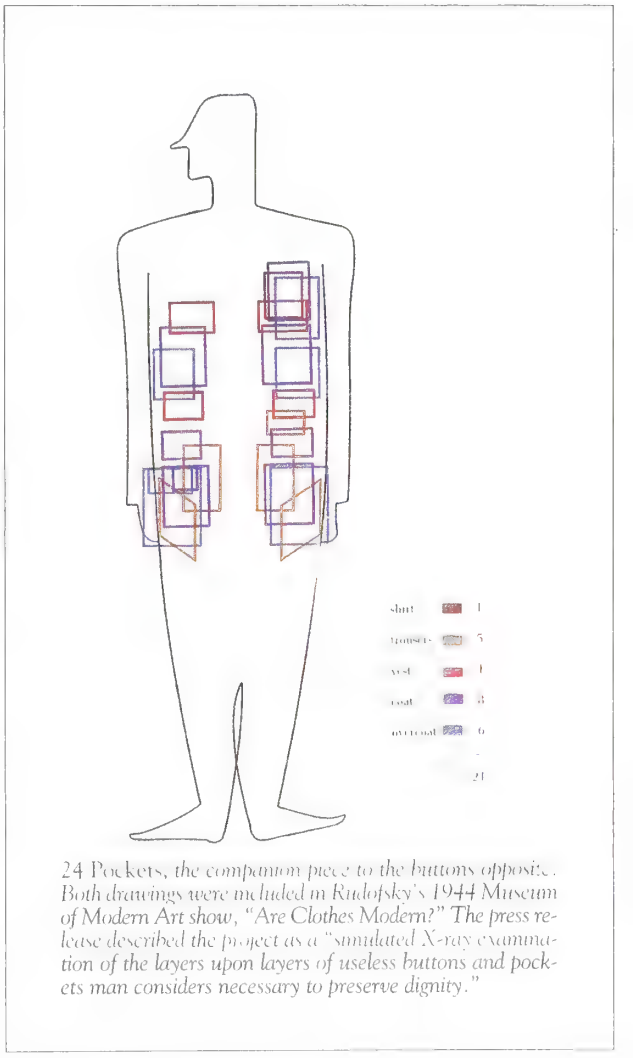

[Translation]

# ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

*From a guide intended to help foreigners understand the idiosyncrasies of British English, found by a journalist for* The Economist *earlier this year on an office wall in the European Court of Justice.*

*What they say:* I'm sure it's my fault.
*What is understood:* It is his fault.
*What they mean:* It is your fault.

*What they say:* I'll bear it in mind.
*What is understood:* He will probably do it.
*What they mean:* I will do nothing about it.



*24 Pockets, the companion piece to the buttons opposite. Both drawings were included in Rudofsky's 1944 Museum of Modern Art show, "Are Clothes Modern?" The press release described the project as a "simulated X-ray examination of the layers upon layers of useless buttons and pockets man considers necessary to preserve dignity."*

*What they say:* I was a bit disappointed that . . .
*What is understood:* It doesn't really matter.
*What they mean:* I am most upset and displeased.

*What they say:* By the way/Incidentally . . .
*What is understood:* This is not very important.

[Exegesis]

## SAY THAT AGAIN!

*From "Expletives as Solidarity Signals in Face-Threatening Acts on the Factory Floor," by Nicola Daly, Janet Holmes, Jonathan Newton, and Maria Stubbe, in the 2004 issue of the* Journal of Pragmatics. *Russell and Robert are workers in a New Zealand soap factory. A "whinge" is defined by the authors as a "long or repeated expression of discontent not necessarily intended to change or improve the unsatisfactory situation."*

Russell opens his whinge with "fuck man," an attention-grabbing device, and goes on to complain that his pay was low last week. Rather than acknowledging and supporting Russell's whinge, Robert responds humorously by challenging the information in Russell's complaint ("Eight ninety? Stick it up your fucking arse"), a response that is not what might be expected between two workmates on good terms. Robert then becomes the whinger, matching or mirroring Russell's whinge with one of his own; he complains that he won't get his pay till the next week. He, too, introduces his whinge with an emphatic "fuck." Russell, now the responder, agrees and commiserates with "oh yeah Sunday, eh." The exchange is clearly a friendly one overall. Robert's "mirroring" behavior is classic solidarity construction as identified by Coates in her 1996 analysis of women-talk; and Russell's response is quite evidently an instance of standard sympathetic positive feedback.

In this context, the use of expletives that would be considered offensive in other contexts serves as evidence of the close relationship between the men. These men are on such good terms that they can swear at each other, not only with impunity but with positive affect. In particular, we suggest that in Robert's challenge to Russell's whinge, "stick it up your fucking arse," the use of "fucking" can be interpreted as a solidarity symbol, a positive politeness strategy.

*What they say:* The primary purpose of our discussion is . . .
*What is understood:* I know what you say.
*What is understood:* He accepts my point of view.
*What they mean:* I disagree and do not want to discuss it any further.

*What they say:* Correct me if I'm wrong.
*What is understood:* Tell me what you think.
*What they mean:* I know I'm right—please don't contradict me.

*What they say:* With the greatest respect . . .
*What is understood:* He is listening to me.
*What they mean:* I think you are wrong, or a fool.

*What they say:* That is an original point of view.
*What is understood:* He likes my ideas.
*What they mean:* You must be crazy!

*What they say:* Very interesting.
*What is understood:* He is impressed.
*What they mean:* I don't agree, or I don't believe you.

*What they say:* You must come for dinner sometime.
*What is understood:* I will get an invitation soon.
*What they mean:* Not an invitation, just being polite.

*What they say:* Quite good.
*What is understood:* Quite good.
*What they mean:* A bit disappointing.

[Design]

## RU12?

*From a paper describing the "Emotion Expression Humanoid Robot" developed by scientists at the Takanishi Laboratory at Waseda University, in Japan.*

We use the Six Basic Facial Expressions of Ekman in the robot's facial control, and have defined the seven facial patterns of "Happiness," "Anger," "Disgust," "Fear," "Sadness," "Surprise," and "Neutral." The strength of each emotional expression is variable by a fifty-grade proportional interpolation of the differences in location from the "Neutral" emotional expression. The robot expresses its



Set, *a painting by Emily Eveleth, was on display in September at Howard Yezerski Gallery, in Boston.*

emotion using its eyebrows, lips, jaw, facial color, and voice.

The eyebrows consist of flexible sponges, and each eyebrow has four degrees of freedom.

We used spindle-shaped springs for the robot's lips. The lips change their shape by pulling from four directions, and the robot's jaw opens and closes the lips.

For facial color, we applied red and blue electro-luminescent sheets to the cheeks so that the robot can express red and pale facial colors.

For the voice system, we used a small speaker set in the jaw. The robot voice is made by LaLaVoice.

The maximum angular velocity of the eyeballs is similar to a human, with 600 degrees per second. There are two color CCD cameras in its eyes. The robot can recognize any color as its target, and, if there are multiple target colors in its view, it follows the largest target.

The robot produces emotional expression not only with facial expressions but also with the upper half of its body. It can move the whole shoulder up and down, or back and forth. The speed of the arm movement is changed according to the emotion of the robot. This enables it to perform such movements as squaring its shoulders when angry or shrugging its shoulders when sad.

Recently we added a waist that has pitch and yaw axes. By adding a waist, the robot pursues the targets using not only coordinated head-eye motion but also coordinated waist-head-eye motion.

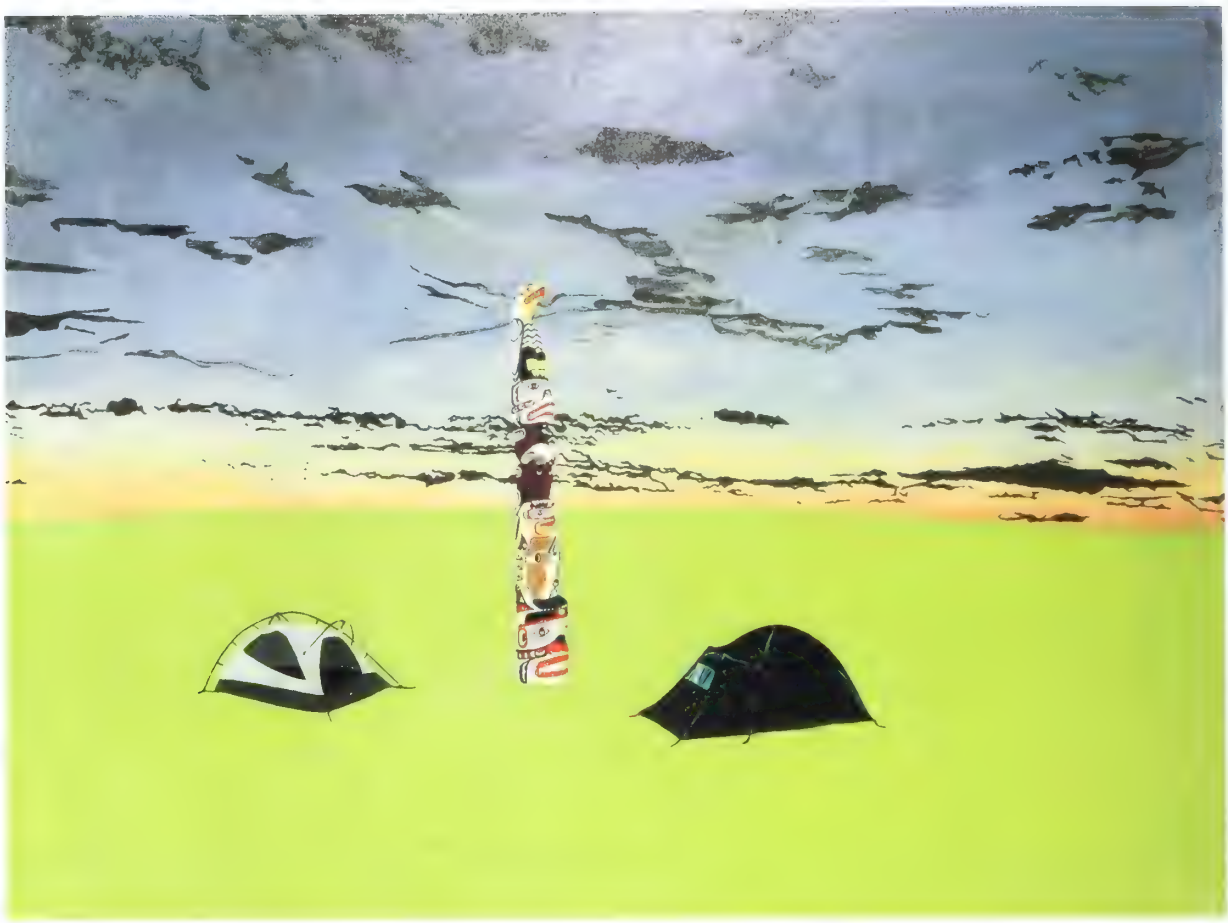
Additionally, we set a lung in its chest. It can display breathing motion, which expresses more emotional motion in addition to breathing air for olfactory sensation.

We used four semiconductor gas sensors in the nose as the olfactory sensation. The robot can recognize the smells of alcohol, ammonia, and cigarette smoke.

The robot has tactile and temperature sensations. We devised a method for recognizing not only the magnitude of the force but also the difference of the touching manner: "Push," "Stroke," and "Hit."

Furthermore, we introduced the Robot Personality because each human has a different personality. The Robot Personality consists of the Sensing Personality and the Expression Personality. The need and the emotion are a two-layered structure, and the need is in a lower layer than the emotion because we thought that the need was nearer to the instinct than the emotion.

In construction of the Mental Model, we considered that the human brain has a three-layered model that consists of reflex, emotion,



Totem, *by Echo Eggebrecht, painted after a model by the artist. Eggebrecht's work will be on display next month at sixspace Gallery, in Los Angeles*

and intelligence. We divided the emotion into Learning System, Mood, and Dynamic Response. The Mental Dynamics, which is the mental transition caused by the internal and external environment of the robot, is extremely important in the emotional expression. There are two big information flows into the robot. One is from the external environment and the other is from the robot's internal state. We adopted a 3D mental space, which consists of a pleasantness axis, an activation axis, and a certainty axis.

Moreover, in order to realize bilateral interaction between human and robot, we introduced the Need Model, consisting of the Appetite, the Need for Security, and the Need for Exploration. We considered that the need [illegible] one of the internal stimuli to the robot. The robot can actively generate and express its behavior based on its need to satisfy its need, and the robot with need continues to exhibit the same behavior until it satisfies its need.

[Episode]

# A NEW WORLD

*A story by V. S. Pritchett, published for the first time in the current issue of* Granta, *"Jubilee!," which celebrates the magazine's twenty-fifth anniversary. The story, written in the late 1930s, was discovered by Jeremy Treglown in the New York Public Library's Berg Collection. Pritchett died in 1997.*

In the late part of that October there was dry weather and not a cloud in the sky for a fortnight. The kind of sky which had sat heavily upon the hills, the fields, and the woods in the summer before Dunkley and the girl came to the house, had gone away like some big, yawning countrywoman; and what was left was space, fairer and taller in its blueness. Not only in the early frosted morning when Dunkley looked out after lighting the fire, but at noon and all through

the day, they felt that they were stepping out of the house into the clear, prickling water of a spring. If they came out on the sunny side of the house and looked up into the sun's face, the light striped and drenched them from head to foot, making their toes spread in their shoes; they thought they were standing under a silent and everlasting fountain. This silence of the month was a mark on everything. Even a laborer digging in the garden and bending up from his spade looked down to where the weald of small fields and small hedges met the hangers like the coast of a long vanished sea and said, "Isn't that quiet?"

Afraid to be a slave to happiness Dunkley used often to get on his bicycle and go off to the town five miles away. Tobacco was the excuse; no one knew him there—that was the charm of the place. He pedaled through the long splash of sunlight. Once in the town, he put his bicycle in the square and walked about looking at the shops. Ironmongery and furniture fascinated him. They set him off in a daydream until he would straighten himself and think, "Something is happening to me. Can other people see it? What is it? Will it go on?" He had the feeling that, like this month, he was suspended in the last of the year's sunlight. This was an interregnum. One day a hand would come down on his shoulder.

One morning when he was shuffling through the square he saw a youngish, sunburned man, well fed and handsome. He was dressed in dandyish checks and he had the pleasant idle air of the country rich. He smiled at Dunkley with the amused enthusiasm of a fellow escaper.

"Do you come from up there?" the young man asked. He waved his stick, indicating the outskirts of the town.

"Where?" asked Dunkley cautiously.

The young man repeated with a friendly impatience, "Up there."

This time he pointed to the cold and dazzling sky. Dunkley looked upward, bewildered. The handsome man touched his black moustache. His fine eyebrows frowned ironically. Then suddenly his face became distorted with exasperation. He slashed his walking stick on the ground and rushed off shouting. The bus drivers, who always stood around in groups here, looked at the roaring man for a second or two and went on talking. Presently the man stopped shouting and came back near them and watched them, smiling the same mocking, familiar, enthusiastic smile.

"Hullo," the inspector said. The young man grinned and gave a shout of laughter. Then all the bus drivers turned round. With the expression of one who is slowly disappointed because he cannot see the person he expected to find there, the man in checks muttered and became angry and again went off thrashing with his stick.

"Rich bastard blown up in the war," a busman said to Dunkley. "No harm in him." Round the square the madman went; he talked to everyone. People smiled, watched him out of the tail of their eyes, secretively. Some drew themselves up and put on the false look one gives a child. He made people go back in their minds to the war and to thinking of something they had done.

The first day, Dunkley went into a panic. He got on his bicycle and went out of the town as fast as he could. The return road was uphill but he did not get off. He strained and gasped till the sweat fell in drops off his temples, his heart punched in his chest, and the country became a whirligig round his head. "Now suppose someone saw me go and then got into that lonely house and set fire to it and killed her," he was thinking. Nothing short of murder would satisfy him. He could see it all clearly. Every bend in the road added a new detail to the picture. He was glad to get to the top of the last hill, to see the brick house on the crest of the lower hill across the valley. He was ashamed of himself. There was the sunlight on the end wall as if it had been there forever, and the place had that exquisite mark of eternity one seems to find in miniatures or some distant thing brought nearer in the lens of a telescope. Up the last climb, he rang his bell until the girl came out. When they were in the house and he had flopped into a chair, she said, "I'm glad you're back. Oh, I'm glad. I couldn't bear it. I can't bear for you to be away from me for a minute. I thought, 'Suppose he has been knocked off and killed.' I saw it all."

"Oh," said Dunkley scornfully. "I'd always let you know." Then they laughed. They shouted with laughter until they believed in each other's existence again. They were new creatures in a new unfinished world. Something new was disclosed every day.

"There's a lunatic down there," Dunkley said as if he were reading it in the newspaper.

What was this new world? It was their love for each other. But what was this? Dunkley wondered. He watched her. She watched him. He was a small man who looked as though he were going to spring after something new every minute; and she was a big girl who looked as though she were about to run after something that made her laugh. Even when they were still, even when they were in different rooms, they were planning to run towards each other. To run after their love, of course; it was there, somewhere between them, invisible, shapeless, impossible to define or describe. What was it? They always expected it to take form; and their agony was hoping that suddenly it would jump, for a flash, into sight. As it was, Dunkley could

feel it leap out of his heart and he would throw it towards her; and she, on the same impulse, would go after what had been in her heart towards him. But often when they met in each other's arms it had gone as surely as a touched bubble. They felt it more steadily and safely when they were apart from each other, when he, for example, was in his room and she in hers. Then Dunkley would get up and open his door an inch and look at her; and, immensely satisfied, return to his room again. When this palled they jeered at each other, and once or twice they had terrible quarrels. These were quarrels which shouted and wrenched like birth pangs. Dunkley spat and she sulked. But there was a core of their peculiar ecstasy in it.

Though the days were quiet in this fortnight, even on the quietest days there was the wind. It soughed in the hangers hour after hour, dying to a murmur and rising continuously but small and hoarse against the windows, a fine, gilded and tuneless song in the sun. Then, settling in the trees and redoubling, the wind became a suave roar, moving from this spur of the wood to the next and dying into the earth like the ever less clearly remembered generations. Then some after-wave would perhaps crash back again and fall with a light bump against the house. When this happened Dunkley used to go to the windows.

The leaves were coloring. There was not the spread of the summer shadows; they were bitten off short, and late in the afternoons were sheer. The woods became hazy smoke-blue walls and the leaves at the crowns of the thinning trees were individually black and clear and restless. They looked like flocking starlings and once or twice Dunkley mistook the gathering starlings for leaves. He and the girl went to the windows because in the things they saw they expected to read the ferment, the simple continuous changes which astonished them in themselves. Had the cattle moved? Had the light changed? Was the beard of shadow still at the foot of the hangers? These were the hourglass of their love. Before the winter picked the bones clean, there was something erratic and eccentric in these fixed clear days which stood in the yellow tatters of summer. The flies were in their last madness, the rooks blew about the sky like paper. One morning, when the hunt was out, muddled by the mixture of woods and wire and sheep gullies, the girl called to Dunkley, "Look quickly." At a long trot a fox was coming down the hill with his brush drooping, his ears cocked and his long, sardonic mouth slavering. He went down the gully and up into the trees opposite where the fox hounds [illegible]

[illegible] reminded Dunkley and [illegible] and laughed [illegible] following the hunt.

Dunkley said, "I saw the mad fellow again today."

"Don't talk about him," she said. "Tell me when you first fell in love with me—when you first knew? I can't believe it."

"What I can never believe is the day when you did. When was it? Now, on that Saturday ..."

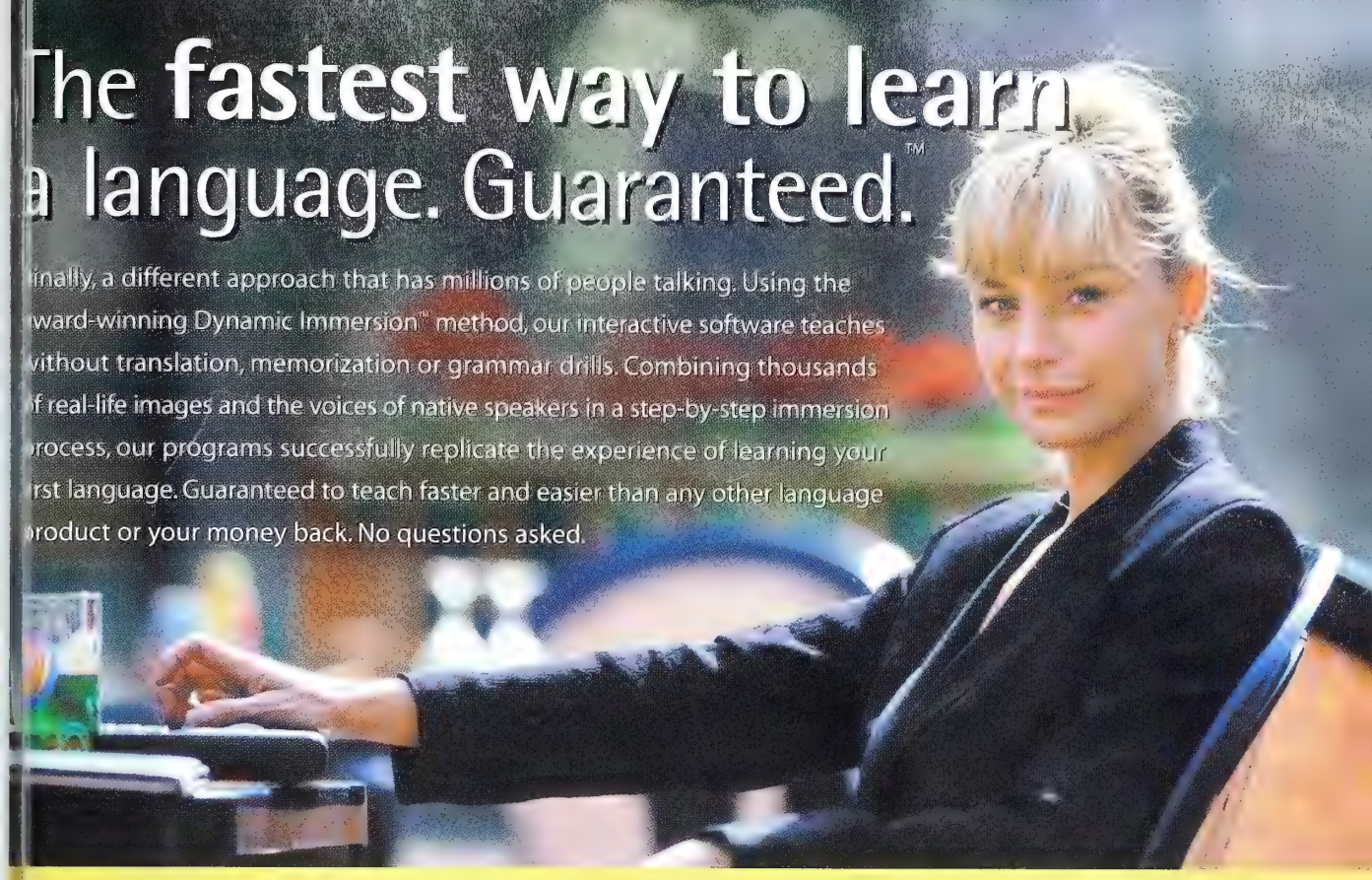
"I knew before then," she said.

They would look up and imagine the delight of the airmen who dived off the steepest places of the sky and droned off on ever more remarkable journeys, dragging their roar behind them. When they had gone and the sound broke off suddenly, Dunkley would stare up waiting for new ones, captivated all day by these far-off and furious men; but the girl called him into the house. In the evening when they had gone, one solitary machine used to fly over, black and low. It was like the first night-insect. It went slowly on its straight course and seemed to send a ripple through the spring-water stillness of the evening air. This plane came every evening at the same hour. Over their heads it came and they often wondered where it was going. When it had passed, Dunkley used to say, "Another day has gone." The air closed over its path. Then the moon like a new-lit lamp rose fast over the fields. A half world of lime-lit lakes and rivers formed under it, and the woods were changed into the foam of soundless waterfalls and shadowy cascades.

The moon commanded the hills, the valley and the fields. All things belonged to it. Each leaf was marked by it, it made its own shadows as strong as the shadows of the sun. The tiles of the roof were hardened by the light. One looked at it and lived only in that moment. But though the moon chalked his clothes and his hands and his face, yet Dunkley's body had the living day in it still. Upstairs in their room when he took off his clothes he could feel the warmth of the day in him. The light fell on her, making loops of shadows on her neck and her breasts, and her shoulders were cool but her body was as warm as bread. They lay down mouth to mouth. There was no other sound in the house but their sounds, no other sounds, no other selves (they felt) in all that countryside. "The year is dying but we are making something beyond the year."

This was also the summit of the young man's madness in the town. The stories Dunkley heard! How the madman laughed and drank and sang and talked about himself ecstatically until, *bang!*—once more the inescapable mine at Festubert went off under him and up he went on the fan of smoke and came down all [illegible] to hit the corrugated iron. ■

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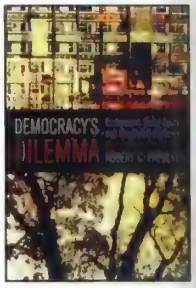
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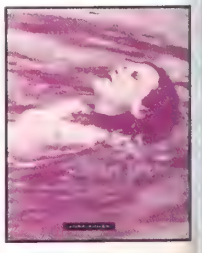
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# ATTACK OF THE SUPERZEROES

## Why Washington, Einstein, and Madonna can't compete with you

*By Thomas de Zengotita*

**TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES**

A headmaster of my acquaintance once sent me an article lamenting the loss of heroes for today's youth. The article concluded, as all such articles must, with a solution-to-the-problem: a strategy for presenting George Washington, of all people, in a way guaranteed to secure admiration. I barely glanced at it. There is no such strategy. Just talking about "how to present" is already hopeless capitulation.

At about the same time, the *New York Times* ran a story that showed exactly why. It was about a new team of curators at Mount Vernon, where attendance had been dismal lately, especially compared with the numbers Monticello was racking up. What with a couple of bios on the stands, scientific and architectural projects on display, a Nick Nolte movie, and the hi-tech DNA sex scandal over Sally Hemings—well, there was buzz out there for Tom. The folks at Mount Vernon were determined to liven up the stodgy image of their founding father, show evidence of cool hobbies, make those wooden teeth a plus, and generally put their hero back on top of the charts.

The centerpiece of their plan was a tour of the grounds and mansion, culminating in a "Death and Funeral Procession Tour" complete with black armbands for visitors to the "death scene."

"Death scene" meant the room where the real George Washington really died, furnished with the things that were really there at the time. But the folks (re)creating this death chamber understood that real wasn't real enough. More was required. They planned to pipe the appropriate smells into the room. They didn't follow through with this idea, but linger over the implications of the fact that they even had thought of it. Presumably sane and sincere people were driven to overreach so ludicrously because, in their hearts, they understood that the real George Washington could never compete with the likes of Oprah or Harry Potter. They had to grab

*Thomas de Zengotita teaches at the Dalton School and the Draper Program at New York University. His book,* Mediated, *is due out in March 2005 from Bloomsbury.*

SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT THE ABSENCE OF NATIONAL CRISIS MIGHT EXPLAIN THE HERO VACUUM, BUT THAT ONE LOST ITS PURCHASE AFTER 9/11

[illegible] It really happened! Rig[illegible] here! Goddamit, smell it if you don't believe me!"

[illegible] that we've crossed a thres[illegible] old, a point beyond which no real person can be a public hero anymore.

This phenomenon is universal. Lamenting the absence of hero[illegible] is endemic. It cuts across all the cultural categories. NOW[illegible] GLAAD, and the NAACP worry about it as much as defenders of th[illegible] canon. Everyone agrees that we need heroes; they ju[illegible] don't agree on *which* heroes should be resurrected [illegible] discovered—that is, represented.

Here's a thought experiment to show why they can't succeed:

Say you wanted to ensure that the Holocaust would never be forgotte[illegible] the full horror of it, the reality. The only way to do it, at this point, wou[illegible] be to ban all representations. No photographs or documentaries, no depi[illegible] tions of skeletal survivors being rescued, no ovens, no piles of shoes a[illegible] bones. And no memoirs, no Anne Frank, no museums, no memorials, n[illegible] movies—no *Shoah*, certainly no *Schindler's List* or *Sophie's Choice*, def[illegible] nitely no *Life Is Beautiful*. A taboo, in other words.

But all the representations would still exist, preserved in a singl[illegible] archive, and the educational requirement would be this: at a certain ag[illegible] every child in the land spends a week in that archive. And that's it. The[illegible] would never forget, believe me.

But, you might protest, it would traumatize those kids, it would sc[illegible] them for life. Exactly. That's why they would never forget. But look, w[illegible] want them to remember and understand the full horror, the reality, bu[illegible] we don't want trauma.

Ah, well then—you're stuck. The reality of the Holocaust *can't* b[illegible] grasped without causing psychic damage. So we'll have to find some for[illegible] of never-forgetting that won't be *too* burdensome but, at the same time[illegible] one hopes, not too trivializing either.

Which is just to say that we'll end up with—just what we've got.

The real-heroes issue is more complex but shaped by the same pressures[illegible] Having a real hero means devoting yourself, subordinating yourself, an[illegible] that's asking a bit too much of people these days. Devotion isn't traum[illegible] but it does seem a bit severe, a bit medieval. Cult wackos come to mind[illegible] Devoted followers are anachronistic in a world made for devoted fans.

Some people thought that the absence of national crisis in recen[illegible] decades might explain the hero vacuum, but that one lost its purchase af[illegible] ter 9/11. Nobody would call Bush or Blair heroes in the old-fashione[illegible] sense, though they tried gamely to fill the position. They just couldn't[illegible] Forget the politics, it was deeper than that. They were just too *small*. Eve[illegible] Rudy Giuliani—more lionized than anyone since, I don't know, Alexan[illegible] der the Great?—even he had sense enough not to make a speech at th[illegible] Ground Zero services. He knew he wasn't big enough for that.

On the flip side, we had all the hyperbole during the Iraq invasion—wher[illegible] not just Jessica Lynch but every G.I. in the world got christened "hero." Run[illegible] away inflation devalued that ancient concept almost overnight.

But the favored explanation says that real heroes have been replaced by[illegible] sports and entertainment stars. And that's right, as far as it goes, but i[illegible] would be better to phrase it the way: in today's environment, real heroes mus[illegible] become stars if they are to exist in public culture. That is, they[illegible] must perform. But as soon as they do, they can't compete[illegible] with real [illegible] who are performers. How neat is that?

The essence of real heroes in the good old days—Newton and Napoleon and Goethe—was that they were essentially *un*real. They were not known as people. They *were* their works and deeds, their myths. They were fictional constructs, even in their own lifetimes, invented by the people who idolized them, on the basis of a few stories and images—sc[illegible]

very few. The whole dynamic is a function of representational quantity and quality.

Real heroes of the past were represented with a frugality almost impossible to credit today: some texts committed to memory; some images known to everyone; places he stood, things he touched; most important of all, a store of anecdotes, circulating informally, the way elephant jokes used to.

Anthropologists know the special power of such stories. They come alive with each retelling because they are subject to constant variation. Unlike printed accounts, they are undetectably adaptable. There is no official version. Unadulterated perfection and immediate relevance are guaranteed. Paucity of representation allows the imagination of followers to supply their hero with just the attributes they need to see in him.

At the same time, these inventions were anchored to flesh. People knew that, unlike Paul Bunyan, their heroes were real. They were perfect *and* real—perhaps someone you knew personally, your uncle or your brother, was there on that glorious day and saw, with his own eyes, Napoleon take his stand upon the bridge at Lodi, and he has been telling the story with irresistible fervor and pathos ever since.

As recently as Einstein and Lindbergh, the essential representational conditions held. Just think how utterly impossible it would be now for a president to be paralyzed from the waist down, as Franklin Roosevelt was—and the public in ignorance of it. Take that as a measure. Think also of the way special-effects movies about outer space made coverage of real space adventures boring for most people. The pathetic production values and shapeless plot, flickering videos of people you can barely identify doing lame things with vials and tubes? Please.

In the same way, as soon as real heroes are represented publicly, repeatedly, they are doomed. In effect, virtual heroes—the real performers—present themselves so fabulously and consistently across decades they make it impossible for hero-candidates from reality to succeed. We don't have real heroes anymore because they are *too real;* representations of them are too rich and detailed. There is no room for us to supply them with mythic life.

VIRTUAL HEROES PRESENT THEMSELVES SO CONSISTENTLY ACROSS DECADES THEY MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR HERO-CANDIDATES FROM REALITY TO SUCCEED



### METHOD ACTING

If you are of a certain age you remember where you were when you heard that JFK had been assassinated. You probably have a story about your experience.

Where I was when JFK was assassinated was in the dance studio of an acting school in Manhattan. About thirty would-be actors and actresses were milling around the room in leotards, stretching, contemplating their mirror images, leaning against the walls, musing, chatting, waiting for our instructor to come in.

The studio door opened and, instead of the instructor, there was the assistant to the school's director. She looked around, groping for words, and finally said, "President Kennedy has been shot. We don't yet know how serious it is." And then she left. There was some stirring and murmuring

Thrift Shop Washington," by Tino Tosi

EVENTUALLY SOMEONE CAME BACK INTO THE ROOM AND SET US STRAIGHT. THE PRESIDENT WAS IN FACT DEAD. THIS WAS NOT AN IMPROVISATION

for a camera crew. A couple of people followed her out, and then someone said, "It's an improv."

Well! Improv! We were really serious acting students. This was irresistible. We turned as one to consult our repertoire of methods, methods for accessing analogous memories, for identifying specific intentions, for reacting rather than acting. We were determined to "be in the moment," which was what one learned to do in those days, studying under Strasberg or Meisner or Adler, mentors to Brando and Dean, heirs to the prophet Stanislavsky, who had scorned the postures of "acting" and made inner truth—being real—the holy grail of his art. That was the point of all the strenuous psychological techniques known collectively as The Method, and we were devoted to them. So when, some minutes later, the assistant returned to announce, her voice breaking, that the president was dead, well, at *that* point, the party really got started.

Acting students fall into two basic categories: the ones who love to do anger and the ones who love to do tears. I was the anger type, thank heaven, so there wasn't much emoting for me to do. The situation didn't suit my talents; this was a moment for the impresarios of tears. And how they went at it. Within minutes, maybe half the people in the room were crying. Some were into silent weeping, sitting in a corner, face uptilted, the gaze averting now and then to rest at random on some stretch of ceiling where the pattern of the peeling paint signified the meaninglessness of it all. A couple of girls were crumpled to their knees, doing the helpless palms-turned-upward thing, keening like Electra over the corpse of Agamemnon. Still others linked up for hugs and consolation and testimonials to Camelot. And so on.



Eventually one of the people who had left the room after the first announcement came back and began to set us straight. The president was in fact dead. This was not an improvisation. Someone turned on a transistor radio. Reality was re-established.

I got out of there immediately. What I saw in those newly stricken faces, already looking as stricken as faces can look, was more than I cared to see. The embarrassment was excruciating, unique in my experience, before or since. It wasn't that we were exposed as phonies in the usual sense. Affectation and sincerity were not ultimately the issue. This went much deeper. It was the realization that there was nothing left, no level or nuance of feeling that hadn't become a resource for our enterprise of Method acting. It was the spiritual equivalent of the last step in the dark, the one that isn't there when you put your foot down.

Of course that's a special case—extreme, condensed, taut with ironic perfection. But it stayed with me over the years, stimulated by more complicated cases that seemed to echo the original. It was as if



...Shirt Shop, Sunset Boulevard)," by Tim Davis

the mourning actors had established a pure standard to which messier manifestations of reflexivity could only aspire. If you happen to be philosophically inclined, you might say they exemplified a phenomenological essence.

I was reminded of them, for example, years later, watching other mourners, assembled in their millions on the streets of London. Di's mourners, so obviously exhibiting their grief, not even pretending that they weren't exhibiting it, understanding that this was their role in the Global Show that their very presence was producing—a show about them "being in the moment" in what amounted to a worldwide improv. Celebrities all, celebrities at last.

There is no direct parallel between the JFK improv and Di's funeral, but there's that common element, and I detect its traces, more elusively embedded, whenever I watch the bereaved on TV. I always wonder, as I watch them in the glow—some for a passing moment, others, turning grief into a worthy cause, taking up residence, launching a second life—I always wonder: what is this *doing* to you?

And it isn't just displays of grief that get enacted in this way. Take how athletes now celebrate themselves after nearly every play. And by extension, the way fans celebrate not just the team or the victory but themselves. There's that same element, that same quality, to be found in the way those exhilarated men position themselves, beefy faces alight with a peculiar blend of exultation and hostility, tendons bulging in their necks, fists pounding the air, bodies thrust forward as if to bulldoze past all compromise, apparently frenzied, apparently berserk, bellowing in tones suggestive of profound vindication, bellowing "Yeaauh! Yeaauh! Yeaauh!" And each "Yeaauh" lifts above the preceding one, as if to reinforce it but also to comment on it, even to parody it, and suddenly you realize that this is also a performance, and a contest, a folk art—and oh-so-self-conscious after all.

And, by further extension, all the high-fiving and hissed-yes-pointing and thumbs-upping in the culture as a whole, in commercials, in our lives, in the continuous play of expressions and gestures that signify degrees of—what shall we call it?—triumphal intensity. The alchemy at work across this spectrum is, at bottom, the same. It precipitates a fusion of the real and represented, a culture of performance that ultimately constitutes a quality of being, a type of person—the mediated person. And, as we shall see, this type of person doesn't have heroes.

A CULTURE OF PERFORMANCE ULTIMATELY CONSTITUTES A QUALITY OF BEING, A TYPE OF PERSON. AND THIS TYPE OF PERSON DOESN'T HAVE HEROES

### THE FLATTERY OF REPRESENTATION

So whence this folk genre, the "where I was when The Event took place" story? Why, for example, didn't members of the greatest generation craft fables of their personal experience of the Attack on America in 1941?

Because they weren't there, that's why.

Be assured that people who were physically at Pearl Harbor *did* have stories of their personal experience, and told them again and again as the years went by. Stories like that are anthropologically grounded. But people who just heard about Pearl Harbor on the radio and read about it in the papers didn't tell such stories, because it didn't feel as if it had happened to them, personally, at all. It's that simple.

One of the most popular public-service-type TV shows of the 1950s was called *You Are There*. The name sounds hokey now, but that was the original miracle of television: everyone became a participant/eyewitness to events on the world stage. And that's why people spontaneously told their stories about the Kennedy assassination, no matter where they were physically. They saw and heard it all unfold. Not just on TV, of course—all the media were contributing—but it was TV that made you feel as if you were there. Reams of coverage, endless coverage, amazing coverage—in a way *more* compelling than if you had been there physically, because virtually

THERE IS A SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS ABOUT YOU THAT MAKES YOUR GRANDPARENTS LOOK LIKE AUTOMATONS BY COMPARISON, UTTERLY WITHOUT REFLEXIVITY

[illegible] perspectives. You weren't in one spot, the [illegible] had been physically there, squashed behind a fat lady, looking in your purse for your sunglasses when the shot went off, thinking [illegible] weeks at first, until you heard the screaming. No, you [illegible] not there in one humble and limited spot; you were everywhere there, because that amazing coverage put you everywhere there. You had a sort of God's-eye view.

This is a form of flattery so pervasive, so fundamental to the very nature of representation, that it get taken for granted. The alchemy that fuses reality and representation gets *carried* into our psyches by the irresistible flattery that goes with being constantly addressed in such fabulous ways. We are so habituated to this flattery that it can be made remarkable only by contrast.

Say your car breaks down in the middle of nowhere—the middle of Saskatchewan, say. You have no radio, no cell phone, nothing to read, no gear to fiddle with. You just have to wait. Pretty soon you notice how everything around you just happens to be there. And it just happens to be there in this very precise but unfamiliar way. You are so not used to this. Every tuft of weed, the scattered pebbles, the lapsing fence, the cracks in the asphalt, the buzz of insects in the field, the flow of cloud against the sky—everything is very specifically exactly the way it is, and none of it is for you. Nothing here was designed to affect you. It isn't arranged so that you can experience it, and you didn't plan to experience it. There is no screen, no display, no entrance, no brochure, nothing special to look at, no dramatic scenery or wildlife, no tour guide, no campsites, no benches, no paths, no viewing platforms with natural-historical information posted under slanted Plexiglas lectern things—whatever is there is just there, and so are you. You begin to get a sense of what it would be like if you weren't the center of it all.

But usually you are. That's why you are a mediated person. Especially if you've been in therapy and done workshops and stuff like that. It's no accident that therapeutic techniques are so akin to that Method developed at The Actor's Studio. Getting in touch with your real feelings so that you can be "in the moment" is the aim in both settings. That's why there is a self-consciousness about you that makes your grandparents look like automatons by comparison. Wonderful people they may have been but, compared with you, utterly without reflexivity. And that puts you on the continuum with Di's mourners. We are all Method actors now. And the cultural consequences are profound.

### VIRTUAL REVOLUTION

When historians look back on the twentieth century, will the rise of rock and roll—and TV/pop culture generally—take on a significance comparable to the Reformation? Will "teen/youth" appear as analogue to the bourgeoisie in the seventeenth century or the proletariat in the nineteenth? If so, the great performers of that culture will be seen as the real heroes of this age.

Pop-music stars who stand for something across their appearances come as close as a mediated culture allows to genuine heroic stature. They are performers and they are real. Dylan, Madonna, Selena, Garth Brooks, Sinatra—these people helped millions of people define themselves. They instilled and reinforced values and conditioned people's life choices, especially style, the attitude that gets you through the day. These star-types posit and reflect the selves their fans have chosen to be. That's how it works—that's how the circle closes.

For consider what this means. It means that these performer/heroes are all [illegible]. Elective in the sense that they are summoning their fans to serve—other than in the sense of being whoever you are.

That's big-time flattery—and a pivot point in the dialectic of mediation. Those stars on the stage, being adored, being pursued, they may be the nes most obviously at the center while we, the fans, are individually in-isible. But consider the totality of the relationship, not just between you nd your particular performer/hero but between you and all those celebri-es, vying for your attention. Is it not ultimately the spectators, in their iddenness, who hold sway, who have the last word? All the gratifications f voyeurism accrue to a judge nobody knows, passing sentence upon the elebrated, the mighty, and the fallen, from that central position in the anopticon of representation. And those celebrities, competing for the idge's attention and approval, are in effect inviting the treatment they get. They are so needy, actually—dressing up, dieting, touring, posing, exposing privacies, cavorting desperately, endlessly, before us.

We should not underestimate the unconscious sense of sovereignty that has been the lot of spectators. The hidden blandishments of representation implanted a sense of entitlement, an envy, a desire for public significance commensurate with our unconscious sense of centrality. Celebrities held a monopoly on the most scarce and precious resource in a mediated society: attention. For spectators, the most basic of specifically human needs—the need for acknowledgment, for significance—was left unsatisfied. Unlike premodern monarchs, who were openly flattered when minstrels and jesters postured before them, postmodern fans, implicitly flattered, had to take action if they were going to make their covert centrality apparent—as only seems fair.




All that was lacking were the means. Until recently. This is the ultimate significance of all the technology: cable, satellite, the web, camcorders, video phones—all the usual suspects. They were the means to virtual revolution.

Coached by performer heroes, seeking the recognition to which they felt entitled, spectators rushed themselves forward as the technological venues opened up, and not only in what we call the "reality show." Other reality shows, under other names, sprang up everywhere. What they all had in common was the celebration of people refusing to be spectators—all the mini-celebrities, for example, who dominate chat rooms and game sites, and the blogs, the intimate "life journals." Think also of raves and flash mobbing, marathon running, karaoke bars, focus groups, talk-radio call-in shows, homemade porn, sponsored sports teams for tots—and every would-be band in the world can now burn a CD and produce cool cover art and posters.

Being famous isn't what it used to be.

Has it ever struck you, watching interviews with people in clips from the 1940s and 1950s, say, or even just looking at them in photographs, how stiff and unnatural they seem? Even prominent people, but especially

EVERY WOULD-BE BAND IN THE WORLD CAN NOW BURN A CD AND PRODUCE COOL COVER ART AND POSTERS. BEING FAMOUS ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

WHAT IS IT WITH THESE STORIES? SELF-RECOGNITION. COMEDY OR TRAGEDY, THEY'RE AIMED AT ELICITING RESPONSES THAT GO, "I'M *EXACTLY* LIKE THAT"

regular folk, the way they lean into the mike and glance awkwardly [illegible] they [illegible] in semi-formal tones, almost [illegible] and the way they mute their voices, as if they can't quite trust the technology to reach an absent audience. But nowadays? Every man on the street, every girl on the subway platform, interviewed about the snowstorm or the transit strike—they are total pros, laughing in the right places, looking directly at the interviewer or into the camera, fluid, colloquial, comments and mannerisms pitched just right for the occasion, completely at ease.

Method actors all.

### IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Reality shows of all kinds accomplish the virtual revolution, but so do those ubiquitous memoirs—and all the fiction that mimics the memoir, the whole *Bridget Jones's Diary* genre. We are inundated with stories of ordinary folk as protagonists in extreme circumstances—shattered by drugs, stricken by disease, stranded in the wild, captured by the mullahs, spending Tuesdays with Morrie, giving kidneys to their sisters, awakened from comas. But starring also in more mundane situations—being dumped by clueless boyfriends, worried about the size of their thighs, and on and on. What is it with these stories?

Identification. Self-recognition. It may be fact, it may be fiction, it may be comedy or tragedy, but it's all aimed at eliciting responses that go, "I'm *exactly* like that" or, "Imagine how I would feel if . . ."

It's all about you.

Notice especially how people identify with confessional suffering even when they can't identify with the particular condition. There is a huge fan base out there for trauma stories, and it goes way beyond the constituency that shares the specific malady. Why? Well, partly it's morbid curiosity, a ghoulish investment in gazing upon the misfortunes of others. of course that's part of it—that's the disdainful high-brow analysis, and there is some truth to it. But there are other reasons. When you witness these public confessionals, how often do you hear this refrain, "I felt so alone, I thought no one would understand what I was going through"? That's the mantra. And it's the key to understanding how people who haven't been, say, abused by their Siamese twin can nevertheless identify with someone who has.

The fact is that a lot of people who have not had some problematic condition thrust upon them by fate *feel as if they have*. They feel alone and misunderstood. They feel unacknowledged, unappreciated. So they identify with a saga of redemption through recognition, which transforms the anonymous victim into the heroic survivor. They respond projectively with something that borders on envy. The specifics of the case are symbolic condensations of the amorphous afflictions that burden them, especially the pain of anonymity, and its public resolution is their own vindication.

These public forms of therapy serve to leaven necessity with reflexivity, just as private therapy has always done. And personal intimacies, morphing into public identities, inevitably get absorbed into performative categories. The process is relatively superficial on the talk-show circuit compared with therapy itself, but the structure and function are the same.

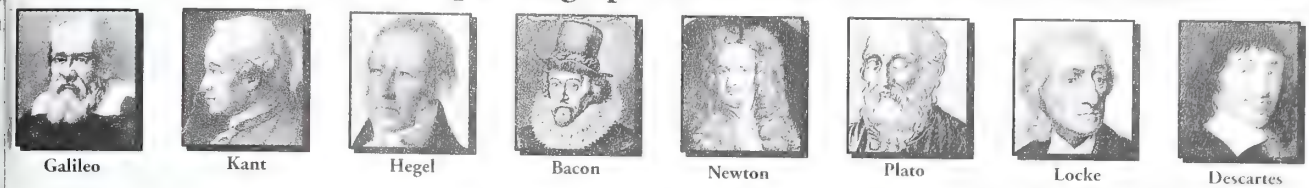
And the aim of all these therapeutic missions? A particular sensation, cherished by all the participants in this mediated ritual of self-overcoming, a feeling that wells up, wells up and overflows when at last it finds expression in words and sobs, freed at last from repression and self-loathing and self-doubt, admitted, at last, into the light of self-acceptance made public, acknowledged, recognized—and, yes, celebrated.

Just for being you. ■

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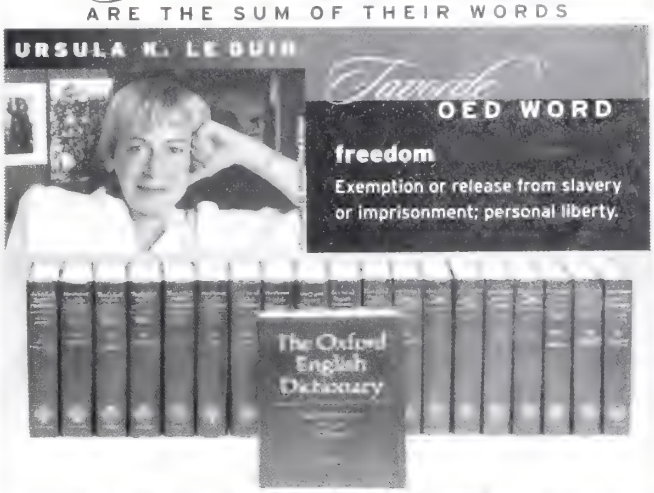
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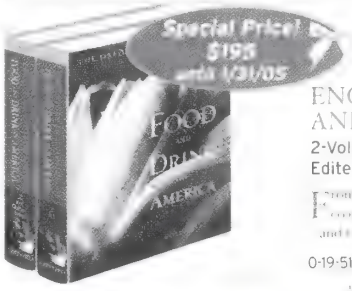
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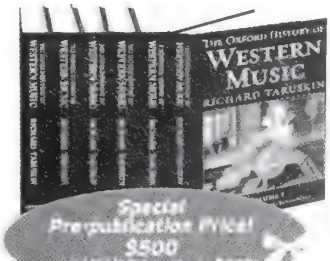



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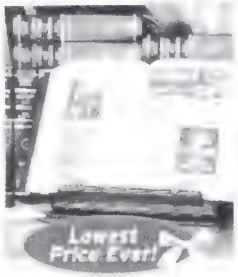
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# MEET THE NEW BOSS

## Man vs. machine politics in Brooklyn

*By Christopher Ketcham*

*Will the people rule? . . . Is democracy possible?*
—Lincoln Steffens

In the early 1990s, when he was running for office and losing just about every year, John O'Hara was known as "Mad Dog" for his quixotic campaigns. Appropriately, his political enemies wanted the young lawyer "leashed, muzzled, and caged, if not shot," as one of them put it to me. Such was the notoriously vindictive—some would say corrupt—atmosphere of Democratic machine politics in Brooklyn. In the old days, insurgents got their legs broken by plug-uglies, or lost ferociously at the polls by the hands of repeaters. Today, the world being less simple, you go before a winking judge to get thrown off the ballot on a technicality and end up bankrupted from the court costs. The plug-uglies have law degrees.



In O'Hara's case, he was also charged with a felony for the impudence of his candidacies. He was heavily fined and, in lieu of prison, given five years' probation and fifteen hundred hours of community service, which consisted of cleaning up garbage in parks. I got to know O'Hara drinking in seedy old bars late at night. One day in 2003, I went to see him working off his garbage detail. The martyrdom of the labor seemed to please him—O'Hara envisioned himself a "political prisoner"—and for that reason he enjoyed visitors. It was April and sunny and strangely hot, and O'Hara was crouched over the grass beer bellied and sweating as he gathered trash into big black bags. "The chain gang!" he snorted when I walked up. Then he exploded in laughter. Here he was, a felon since 1997, stripped of his law license and his livelihood (he had been a Wall Street attorney), the son of working-class Irish, the first in his family to go to college, and now his supervisor was directing him to swab the feces from the park's toilets. "Long way from Wall Street," he said, talking, as usual, out of the side of his mouth in a kind of half-baked James Cagney. Then he burst again into his red-faced, big-shouldered laugh.

The mirth arose, in part, because the corruption that had rendered O'Hara a footnote was now, in April of 2003, exploding across the front pages of New York's dailies. Most of it centered on the Brooklyn courthouse where O'Hara had been, as he described it, "fucked in the ass by a hack judge." There were charges of bribery and case-fixing, of judges paying as much as $100,000 to climb the bench, of extortion by Democratic Party bosses. One judge was caught soliciting $115,000 to fix a personal-injury suit. In the surrogate's court an estimated $8 million had disappeared from Brooklyn estates into the pockets of the party's crony lawyers. It was an embarrassing year for the borough, a throwback to the old Tammany rottenness, or, rather, evidence that Tammany had never really gone away. To top it off, that summer a Brooklyn councilman was assassinated at gunpoint by a psychotic rival, who himself was shot down in the act. The assassin was

*Christopher Ketcham [illegible] in Brooklyn. He is the author of* Notes from September 11, *a book of poems.*

Illustration by [illegible]

an insurgent who had been forced off the ballot one too many times and, apparently, been driven nuts by the system. He became a terrorist—the other path O'Hara sometimes pondered after too many beers.

But O'Hara believed too much in the lessons of his civics teachers; he believed in the system as the Founders established it: pluralistic, agonistic, a cacophony of voices, not guns. He wanted to run for office; the machine did what it had to do. Still, if one worked hard enough, the machine could be

which were heading that way. Some, like Tammany under Tweed, stretched their power into the legislatures; some "made" presidents. Most were Democratic, like Boston and Kansas City and San Francisco; a few were Republican, such as Philadelphia and Pittsburgh; and some, like Albany, regularly switched camps. All at one time or another were fantastically corrupt, profiteering on the staggering urban growth of the Gilded Age (New York's Tenth Ward, on the Lower East Side, was calculated in the 1890s to be the

ALL MACHINES AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER WERE FANTASTICALLY CORRUPT. BONDS, RENT, TAX ASSESSMENTS, UTILITIES, DOCKS, STREETS, SEWERS, PUBLIC TRANSIT—EVERYTHING WAS FOR SALE

fought and conquered and eventually dismantled, or so O'Hara believed. Watching him clean toilets, I began to think that here was what happened when a person, alone, tried to shake up a dying democracy. In retrospect, this was naive. I had grown up in Brooklyn, lived in Brooklyn my whole life, never knowing that the machine was all around me—that perhaps Brooklyn was not a failure of democracy but the fate of democracy; not the anachronism but the model, and the future, even, of the nation.

Brooklyn, of course, is a degenerated branch of an old species, big-city bossism, that once covered the American landscape. William Marcy Tweed, porcine inventor of machine politics and archetype of the boss, planted the form into the urban soil in the 1860s. It fed on the peculiar nexus of mass immigration and municipal expansion that arguably defined American life in the half century after the Civil War. Immigrants packed the hostile cities, bereft and beaten-up, and the bosses, often their countrymen (Irish, immigrant, working class), met them with the offer of a simple graft that was the essential component of all machines. The newcomer was quickly naturalized and registered to vote and was given a job or shelter, or, later, turkeys at Easter or hods of coal in winter. The boss, in return, got the vote of a desperately thankful man, a vote that was obedient and reliable. The boss purchased the votes of the neediest with the same aplomb that he sold off city contracts to the greediest. This was no new phenomenon: politics as business, the politician as power broker. But before the advent of the boss, American politicians were understood, conceptually, as gentry, a disinterested class of the educated "best men." Now the politico rose from the tenement.

By 1890, half of America's twenty largest municipalities were run by machines, and the oth-

densest human habitation on earth). Bonds, rent, tax assessments, utilities, docks, streets, sewers, public transit—everything was for sale. In New York, the Tweed courthouse eventually cost four times the Houses of Parliament. A Tweed contractor charged $2,870,464.06 for a plastering job that should have cost $20,000. Padding every account, the Tweed Ring in a mere decade bilked taxpayers of at least $100 million (more than $1.3 billion in today's money). In Philadelphia, "the city of Brotherly Loot," grafters joked that they counted the take to the chimes of Independence Hall. Courts were stacked, elections stolen. In New York, Hell-Cat Maggie, a "shoulder-hitter," filed her front teeth and wore brass claws on her fingers as she tore into Republicans on Election Day. The brutality reached a high point of sorts in March 1934, when the Tom Pendergast machine in Kansas City (which pushed Truman into national politics) murdered four people and assaulted more than 200 more to secure a plurality of 59,000 votes. "The spirit of graft and of lawlessness is the American spirit," lamented Lincoln Steffens, the muckraker, in a moment of tragic pique. In Minneapolis, he reported in 1904, "thieves and swindlers" had ever been invited "to go to work" by the police department: "The government of a city asked criminals to rob the people."

Steffens was journalism's answer to the new politics—he was one of the first investigative reporters—and he tabulated for history, in the collection of magazine pieces that he called "The Shame of the Cities," the price of the machines' widening greed. In bossism and bribery and corruption Steffens saw "no ordinary felony, but treason" against the hopes of the republic. "The effect of it," he wrote, "is literally to change the form of our government from one that is representative of the people to an oligarchy." As for the vaunted boss, he was "the product of a freed people that

have not the spirit to be free." Steffens soon found, to his dismay, that the outcry made no appreciable difference in the public mind. The people were not ashamed, so long as they got theirs.

Steffens died just shy of the reforms of the 1940s that undercut the machines after almost a century of sway. Civil-service merit testing, non-partisan elections, the secret ballot, and the rise of the welfare state stripped the bosses of purpose and resources—the federal handout usurped the ward handout—and by the end of the New Deal era, the big-city machines had disappeared or had been balkanized into county operations. The holdouts in New York City—the Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn machines—pivoted and adapted, consolidating federal and state entitlements into the "honest graft" of patronage for a rising middle class, with blacks and Hispanics now the recipients of the handout that once drew the Irish vote. This was the model of the Daley machine in Chicago (and persists today under Richard Daley Jr.), as it was also the model, tweaked to fit the suburban homeowner, in Nassau County on Long Island, where, as recently as the 1980s, a Republican machine controlled 20,000 jobs. The objective was always the same: monopolization of public money, the starvation of opponents, a total dominion of the ballot box through favor—honest graft that Brooklyn by the 1970s, when John O'Hara was running his first petitions, had raised to the level of art.

At the age of seven, John O'Hara was writing letters to his congressman, complaining that he paid sales tax on toys but didn't have the right to vote. Four years later, he worked his first campaign, McGovern for president, handing out flyers, and was devastated when McGovern lost in a landslide. By the age of sixteen, he was investigating malfeasance for the high school newspaper and caused a minor storm when he got the school principal fired for not having a principal's license. The story made the *Daily News*.

To O'Hara, muckraking and reform—cleaning up Brooklyn, changing the world—were the only legitimate reasons to get into politics. The reform movement of 1974 gave him the chance. The boss of Brooklyn then was the legendary Meade Esposito, who, like the bosses before him, became rich fleecing the system. Like them, he was fat, jolly, profane, mob-connected, vengeful as an emperor, kind to his neighborhood, and frank about his larceny. Like them, he was at one point "boss of the fucking state," as he himself said; Governor Nelson Rockefeller sent him a Picasso for his favors. "Don't say I was honest," Esposito told reporters, "just say I never got caught."

His preferred medium of graft was the justice system itself, the lawyers and the made judges who gave the lawyers business or found favorably in their cases. It was also the local newspapers that advertised courthouse auctions. It was the landlords and developers who contributed to the party and got the zoning or tax breaks they wanted; the printers who got the palm card and petition contracts; the civil-service unions whose "merit" employment was rarely enforced. No-bid, backroom dealing sealed these relationships, all of them vaguely legal and perfectly corrupt.

The 1974 reform that hoped to clean all this up was, like most municipal revolts, messianic, middle class, sincere, and righteous. It rose out of the run-down Irish enclave of row houses and walk-ups of central Brooklyn, the neighborhoods of Park Slope and Sunset Park, where O'Hara grew up. The rebels met in an old smoky storefront that had three folding chairs, a folding table, and one phone; they traveled in a rusty van, throwing buttons from a big white bag while people threw eggs at their heads. They ran candidates for district leader, state senate, state assembly, and for governor



they backed Sunset Park's congressman, Hugh Carey, whom Esposito strongly opposed. The slate swept to victory; O'Hara got his first taste of drunkenness in celebration.

By the 1980s, however, the movement had dwindled to a few recognizable figures, chief among them a Yale graduate and Manhattan lawyer named Jim Brennan, who, as the state assemblyman from Park Slope, would become known for his integrity and shrewdness. And yet, as so often happens, Brennan's reform soon became a machine of its own. This wasn't in keeping with the world-shattering revolt young O'Hara had envi-

stoned, and in its own way [illegible] threatening repudiation of everything O'Hara had hoped for.

A machine exists to produce money for the people who operate it, yes, but what it actually does in fact is even simpler: it wins elections, and it wins them repeatedly, by whatever means. By definition, then, a machine is a creature of democracy, arising only where universal franchise and electoral competition meet and particularly where rapid urbanization couples with rising need and a systemic failure to meet the need—where social change threatens a descent into chaos and collapse.* This was the challenge that the American machines met and conquered at the end of the nineteenth century, and it can be argued that



machine governance, under the masterful guidance of the boss, forged the modern American city.

Facing a gigantically fragmented field of ethnicities and parochial interests, the bosses saw with no little prescience that eighteenth-century charters written for the village and the town could no longer juggle the conflicts of a metropolis. Only by what one Tweed biographer called the "big pay-off"—mass corruption—could he mollify all parties to draw them to a common effort. Democracy, in short, *demanded* graft. And

*Like so many American exports, machines have taken root wherever conditions were ripe worldwide, in southern Italy after World War II, in post-colonial Africa, in India, and among the cities of the Asian tigers. Today, Senegal, Kenya, Zambia, and Ghana function under machines linking remote villagers and newly urbanized peasants to corrupt government bosses.*

[illegible] to [illegible] government, extra[illegible] and that was the key: pragmatic [illegible], the bosses got things done. Even Lincoln Steffens in his moral fervor recognized the complexity of the solution to the problem of the city that the bosses represented. Martin Lomasney of Boston was perhaps the most eloquent in explaining bossism to the young reporter: "There's got to be in every ward somebody that any bloke can come to—no matter what he's done—and get help. Help, you understand; none of your law and justice, but help." The bosses, with their wards and clubhouses, saloon meetings and torchlight parades and street parties, humanized politics; they gave the underdog a chance at survival. (Explicit losers in a Protestant world, the Irish turned to the machine, the Italians, traveling the same shadow road, turned to the mob. Thus were the two peoples stirred into the melting pot.*) Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote that the machines were the first example in history of sustained governance of a city "by men of the people," though perhaps one could find antecedents in the reign of the Gracchi in Rome or the Commune in Paris. Models of upward mobility, the bosses created a welfare state before there was such a thing, before government was equipped, or cared, to deal with the ills of the typhus ward and the suicide ward, with its epidemics of crime, alcoholism, hopelessness. Unlike the bureaucrats who replaced him, the boss answered need with no questions, no "damn fool investigations," as Tom Pendergast explained. "No, by God, we fill his belly and warm his back and vote him our way."

The boss's ultimate goal, however, was order, not progress, so he was violently anti-labor, crushing radicalism wherever it appeared, and never sought to institutionalize his services. And yet, paradoxically, the boss embraced a kind of progressivism, if only because bettering the city bought him votes, kept him in power, and filled his pockets. Brokering huge franchises and monopolies, he improved roads, sewers, lighting, built libraries and parks and museums and hospitals, extended subways and trolleys and docks. Tammany at its height produced the Brooklyn Bridge and the Museum of Natural History.

But the secret labor of the machine, as one historian wrote, was "to watch over and manage the disappearance of real power from public view," the end of which was a kind of soft despotism. Controlling the courts, the police, the legislature, the ballot box, and the nominating convention, and abetted in all this by the wealthiest elites, machine bosses drove the people into the agora.

[illegible] the dying words of mafia boss John[illegible] "Tell Tom Pendergast," he whispered, "I love him."

merely to receive the imprimatur that continued rule required. Love and fear were the goads, not the ideal of self-government. "The American citizen does not understand self- or representative government, and does not demand it," wrote Steffens in an open letter to Czar Nicholas II. "The American people are asking for 'good government.' All they mean by this is clean streets, well lighted and honestly policed by a police force which, if it must blackmail vice and protect crime, shall do so quietly." Steffens assured the czar that even under the bother of the franchise and a constitution, Russia's autocracy might continue unmolested.

By 1984, at the age of twenty-three, O'Hara had made bitter enemies of just about every one of his mentors in the Brooklyn reform movement. Naturally, they had handed out patronage, stacked legislative committees, created "no-show" and "seldom-show" jobs (as the *New York Times* observed). The reform machine under Brennan followed the same ethos as every machine: loyalty was sainthood; betrayal, apostasy. This was an Irish ethos. O'Hara's defection was also an Irish habit, the periodic rebellion against the crown that usually ended badly for the rebel. O'Hara wanted "purity," a cleansing of the municipal ground, the same "self-government" Steffens sought but didn't know how to deliver. And purity was a state achieved only by never getting elected.

Still, O'Hara the maverick set out to reform the reformers. In 1990 he finally passed the New York bar; it was his sixth try. He'd paid for CUNY law school by driving taxis on the night shift; he kept a poster from the movie *Taxi Driver* on his wall. In the 1990s he ran for office against Brennan or Brennan's cronies six times in almost as many years, for state assembly and for city council. In 1992, at age thirty-one, he lost against Brennan's handpicked candidate by just a few hundred votes. He was emboldened. He became known across Brooklyn as "the gadfly," the "perennial candidate." The *Times* called him a "political brawler." The Brennanites never tired of painting O'Hara as a criminal for this enthusiasm. Brennan denounced him to the public as a "psychopath," and legends arose that O'Hara's mayhem was not limited to electoral challenges. The allegations were always unproven, and there was never a police report or complaint of any sort, but the legends, repeated enough, took on

among the Brennanites they became a kind of contagious delusion. There was the vision of a crazed O'Hara swinging a bat in front of a Brennan crony's house; there was O'Hara dressed in a clown suit terrorizing Jim Brennan's neighbors. O'Hara could be crude and growling and arrogant—a friend once called him "King of the Ballbusters"—and when he thought you disagreed with him he pushed and cajoled and poked you on the shoulder and asked, "Whattaya, got two sticks rubbing together for a brain? Of course I'm right!" His mouth once landed him in a wheelchair in the emergency room. But his ball-busting, it seemed to me, was simple Brooklyn frankness, not pathology. Indeed, the lack of artifice reminded me most of the old Tammany bosses.

In any case, his public record spoke louder than the rumors of blood. The Citizens Union, New York's oldest good-government group, concluded that O'Hara was "a man of considerable charm" and "an outstanding civic activist in his home district." In 1992 the *Times* endorsed him for state assembly among five contenders, praising his "feel for the district." Joyce Purnick, who wrote the endorsement, told me the editorial board "felt O'Hara would shake things up a bit in Albany."

His campaign headquarters was over a cop bar where the drunks, off-duty, discharged their pistols into the ceiling for kicks. He ran his campaigns on pennies, raising money "on the streets," trawling the lower reaches of Broadway, among the law firms of the financial district. He did well with old-timers, though, who grew up poor in Brooklyn and had made a name for themselves and moved out to mansions on Long Island—"old Jewish guys, old hustlers, they had it tough, they got where they were 'cause they had balls." An executive once gave O'Hara $1,500 after he'd elbowed his way into the office, sat down, and told him his vision of state government. "Blow it up. Burn it to the ground," O'Hara said. "Real reform means the system as it stands has to be annihilated, because right now it's failing by design. Millions of dollars are wasted every time the legislature fails to pass the budget. And that's the only thing it does consistently.' What I'd like to do is get a

A MACHINE EXISTS TO PRODUCE MONEY FOR THE PEOPLE WHO OPERATE IT, YES, BUT WHAT A MACHINE DOES IN FACT IS EVEN SIMPLER: IT WINS ELECTIONS, AND IT WINS THEM REPEATEDLY, BY WHATEVER MEANS

*This is true. Fiscal year 2004 marked the twentieth consecutive session in which the New York state legislature failed its budgetary duty, making it the nation's most delinquent body of lawmakers, even as it employs more lackeys and introduces more unfinished legislation than any other state legislature.*


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popular referendum to abolish the legislature and start over. You never see politicians getting laid off. I say lay 'em all off!"

"Okay, you seem like you're into it," the executive said, wishing he hadn't let O'Hara in. But he gave him the money.

Boss Tweed near the height of his plundering was cornered by reporters and accused of defrauding the public. "What are you going to do about it?" he said. Lincoln Steffens called this "the most humiliating challenge ever issued by the One Man to the Many," which was arguable, but it colored everything that urban scholars later wrote about civic reform. Steffens was characteristically gloomy about what, exactly, would be done: "Reform with us," he observed, "is usually revolt, not government, and is soon over." In 1871 a reform revolt toppled the boss of bosses from power; similar spasms toppled his Tammany heirs four times between 1894 and 1933. Yet Tammany always emerged stronger, better managed, because nothing much seemed to get done under reform administrations. Tweed and the boss crowd were portrayed as frothing monkeys and birds of prey, but the worst of the reformers were effete, priggish, Protestant, patrician, reaching backward to an edenic state of governance—pre-immigrant, Yankee-pure—that probably never existed and could not exist. The bosses called them "Goo-Goos," "YMCA types," "silk hats and silk socks and nothing in between." The masses wanted tangibles; the reformers gave them ideology. The reformers often were more interested in legislating morality—shutting saloons, jailing prostitutes—than in improving conditions, though the message was couched in high concern. Put "good men" in place of the monkeys and vultures, the theory went, and presto, you'd have a new age in governance. Sincerity, of course, did not translate to intelligent action.

Still, cycles of reform and reaction were as regular as the seasons, a law of political life. Nationally, the Populist Party, born in 1892 of agrarian unrest, decried the "vast conspiracy against mankind" represented by "capitalists, corporations, national banks, rings, trusts," and the "millionaire's club" that was the U.S. Senate in the Gilded Age (and still is). The "people's party" demanded fair wages, government ownership of utilities, corporate regulation—the first national progressive platform. Four years later, the people got William McKinley, the robber baron's president. McKinley's manager, the Ohio senator and boss Mark Hanna, pioneered the modern campaign of the mass corporate shakedown, raising an unprecedented $7 million (some $150 million today). *En revanche,* there was Theodore Roosevelt, whose "Square Deal" balanced business and regulation, and, as a result, set the federal government on course to its modern shape.

Roosevelt's playbook in this uphill fight was written in the cities, where by 1900 the most effective reformers, not surprisingly, had harnessed bossism to the cause. The so-called reform bosses, notably in Cleveland and Detroit, used the powers of the machine to regulate or purchase outright the franchises and utilities and public transit that had produced such lucrative graft. They established unemployment relief, workplace safety, the eight-hour day, fair taxation. The convictions embodied in the Square Deal, the New Deal, Truman's Fair Deal, the Great Society—the structures that made the bosses irrelevant—were all born, to some degree, out of the Democratic rank-and-file of the urban machines. The reform bosses had reformed themselves out of existence.

THE BOSSES WERE PORTRAYED AS FROTHING MONKEYS AND BIRDS OF PREY, BUT THE WORST OF THE REFORMERS WERE PRIGGISH, PROTESTANT, PATRICIAN, REACHING BACK TO AN EDENIC STATE OF GOVERNANCE THAT NEVER EXISTED

The reform machine in Brooklyn made no such error, positing itself as the honest alternative to the "regular" machine that chugged on even after Meade Esposito died in 1993 (eighty-six years old and $6 million richer). The reformers thrived as a result—won elections, got posts, directed state money—but to an outsider they looked more like a toothless minority party that, true to reform's finest tradition, never got much done.

Such is the relative value of honesty. As for John O'Hara, he had a premium on the stuff; by the mid-1990s he was considered a failure in politics, a perennial loser. His base, the elderly Irish and Italians of Sunset Park, had died off or evaporated to the suburbs, replaced by Hispanic power that the reform machine had channeled to its own ends.

Somehow, though, he managed to get on the [illegible] year. In the demented labyrinth [illegible] state election law, this can amount [illegible] fact, for New York allows nominating

petitions to be challenged by one's opponent on the most picayune grounds (a bungled address, a typo, an unsigned cover sheet). Each year, vast sums are spent on eagle-eyed election lawyers, who at $400 an hour invalidate one by one the signatures on the green sheets, nullifying entire candidacies under the pall of court-clogging "petition fraud" lawsuits. The result of this often inane rite is that the state of New York for years produced over 50 percent of all election litigation in the United States. Ironically, these traps and pitfalls, designed to prevent the wholesale election frauds perfected by the old machine, are now the chief machine weapon to quell insurgency.

In election year 1996, the year of his arrest, John O'Hara had fought from under a particularly long and brutal petition challenge by Jim Brennan. He was also under investigation by the Brooklyn district attorney. Men from the D.A.'s office had shown up at his mother's house, banging on the door, asking for her, for him, but his mother was too frightened to answer. The detectives visited his campaign headquarters and his apartment, where they'd rifled his garbage, tossing it in the street. O'Hara kept on the move, staying with friends, living on couches, convinced that his phone was tapped.

The election itself, on September 10, was "the worst electoral debacle in modern city history," according to the *Village Voice*. By midday, polling places had collapsed into chaos, following the late arrival of some 1,700 voting booths that were expected to be delivered overnight from the city Board of Elections. Crowds of angry voters queued in the unseasonable heat and were finally sent home, and investigators later concluded that at least 10,000 Brooklynites, and possibly many more, were disenfranchised, victims of an internecine war over control of the patronage-rich surrogate's court. Fittingly, a local newspaper soon ran a cartoon showing U.N. blue helmets marching into Brooklyn with guns drawn.

O'Hara's own paranoia proved prescient that day as well, when his girlfriend was attacked on the street as she handed out flyers for his campaign. Court records identified the assailant as John Keefe, the chief of staff to Assemblyman Brennan. According to O'Hara's girlfriend, it was Brennan himself who piloted the car in which Keefe fled after tearing up her posters and knocking her to the ground. Brennan would not talk to me about this incident, nor would Keefe. Standing amid the police officers and flashing lights and watching his weeping girlfriend give a statement, O'Hara for a brief moment wanted to get in a car and find Brennan and his maniac staffer. But that wasn't his way. The courts, he vowed, would settle things.

Keefe was soon the beneficiary of an oddly lax justice, courtesy of the Brooklyn district attorney. Indeed, charged with assault and sex abuse in the third degree, Keefe failed to appear at the many hearings, in contravention of basic procedure (criminal defendants are normally always required to appear in person). After a year of adjournments, the main witness for the girlfriend moved to Florida, Keefe copped to a minor harassment plea, and the D.A.'s assistants would not be further distracted. They were apparently busy on a more pressing matter.

Six weeks after the events of September 10, John O'Hara received word from the Brooklyn D.A. that he was a wanted man, for charges unknown. O'Hara surrendered in a kind of fugue



shock, riding the subway to the Court Street station, to the D.A.'s office tower, where an aide brought him to a room of peeling plaster and sat him down and handed him the indictment, which told an odd story. From October 1992 to October 1993, O'Hara lived in two apartments in Brooklyn; O'Hara had registered to vote from the second of these two apartments. This second apartment, unfortunately, appeared not to fit the parameters of what the law defines as a "fixed permanent and principal home." In the ridiculous language of New York state election law, a "fixed" home derives its legitimacy by being the place "to which [the voter] wherever temporarily located always intends to return." In essence, the law states that a citizen with no fixed location—say, someone living in a hotel, or a transient in a shelter, or studying in a dormitory, or someone with two homes (since only one of these can be "principal and

permanent") – forfeits the right to vote. [illegible] much of New York state election [illegible] statute is absurd and indefensible – it has been determined unconstitutional under federal law. For this reason, no one in the annals of the state had ever been successfully prosecuted under its rubric – until *People v. O'Hara*. (Incidentally, John O'Hara is the only New Yorker to be convicted of illegal voting since 1873, when suffragette Susan B. Anthony was tried and convicted.) And if voting was the crime, O'Hara was a model recidivist. He had voted in every election for which he was eligible from age eighteen on – scores of ballots over a lifetime. But now a detective fingerprinted him with a worn-out ink pad, flashbulbed him for a mug shot, cuffed him, and took him to a holding cell. The prisoners, three black men, laughed when they heard the charge, and someone muttered, "Glad I don't vote."

Thus began a legal odyssey that has lasted eight years. The case originated in the office of O'Hara's nemesis, Brennan. It was pursued as a favor and then as part of an ultimate calculus by another Irishman, Brooklyn District Attorney Charles "Joe" Hynes, who today remains a pure creature of the Brooklyn machine. D.A. Hynes would regret having ever touched it; he himself turned out to be guilty of almost the very same crime, having once registered to vote from his Brooklyn office (most certainly not a legitimate residence, since he never lived at the location).* Hynes expected O'Hara to plead out to a misdemeanor. But O'Hara was belligerent, and when the case went to trial O'Hara openly mocked his prosecutor. The judge offered him a second plea deal, a variant of a no contest, but this, again, meant standing down, admitting guilt. "Fuck that," O'Hara said. When he was finally convicted in July of 1999, after a mistrial and a reversal on appeal, the court in its ire fined him $20,000, gave him probation, and told him to clean the borough's garbage. Certain of vindication, O'Hara appealed the decision a total of ten times, through three state courts and two U.S. appellates, until at last the U.S. Supreme Court, in January 2004, declined to hear his motion to dismiss.

Since the election of George W. Bush, a G.O.P. machine has arisen that, in the intricacy and efficiency of its parts and in the scope of its ambition, would evoke the envy of even Tweed himself. If Brooklyn is the final perfect expression of machine politics at the local level, the national Republican Party seems to have taken corruption to another, more perfect place, for it has managed at last to disconnect the machine from the democracy. No longer need there be a trade-off between the desirable suspension of justice and law and the expansive fact of helping constituents. Tweed would nod knowingly at the corruption and waste of Iraqi reconstruction contracts, the commissioning of the regulatory function to industry lobbyists, the spoils dispensed among Bush's Pioneers following the victory of 2000. But he would be awed by the concomitant destruction of federal programs designed to help working people. Bossism, in a sense, has come full circle. The G.O.P. machine seeks the destruction of the very welfare state that the old municipal bosses jerry-built for the masses who delivered the vote.

As with the old bosses, though, permanent reign is the overarching purpose, and it is no surprise that the architect and enabler of this venture, Karl Rove, should envision himself as the Mark Hanna of our time. After all, Hanna's big-money win of 1896 ushered in a thirty-six-year period of six Republican presidencies (interrupted only by the Wilsonian interregnum). Rove's point man in Congress is House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, enforcer in an unprecedented power grab that seeks, as the key to success, to pauperize and disenfranchise the Democratic Party and render it a permanent minority. DeLay appears to understand that if all politics is machine politics, then the game will be won or lost on a field far removed from either ideology or ethics.

On K Street, for example, Republicans under DeLay increasingly pressure the trade associations and lobbyists to hire only party stalwarts. As an arm of the so-called K Street Project, launched in 1995 in collusion with longtime anti-tax crank Grover Norquist, this effort is catalyzing a major shift in fund-raising, as industry recognizes the obvious advantage of one-party government.

DeLay has also attempted to orchestrate historic mid-decade redistricting in state legislatures, snatching new congressional seats in Texas and attempting to do the same in Colorado and Ohio, shattering the long-standing bipartisan agreement of decennial remapping. Tort reform will neutralize the Democrats' trial lawyers (as it enriches insurance firms); a fulsome embrace of Israel siphons Jewish money. Privatize Medicare, give the ill health of the nation as spoils to Republican friends and donors. Privatize Social Security, collect on the hundreds of trillions of dollars annually that mutual funds make managing the accounts.

*So, too, was George Herbert Walker Bush, who, for years, was vice-president in Washington, D.C., maintained a "residence" for voting purposes at the Houstonian Hotel in Houston, Texas. In fact, tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, of people could be indicted under the O'Hara precedent, most prominently the poor in urban enclaves, the minorities and immigrants who are historically nomadic but often within the same voting district.*

All very honest machinations, and all imed, as Grover Norquist explains, at realizing he radical right-wing project of reducing the ederal government to the size at which gov-rnment, like an infant in the hands of a mad nother, can "be drowned in a bathtub." That he government continues to grow at a record ate proves only that ideology is not the friend of the machinist.

It appears that the one pressure this new ma-hine will likely not face is sustained suffrage. In 002, 98 percent of those seeking reelection to the House of Representatives won, which beats the olitburo for stability. Redistricting ensures this, n tandem with a lax electorate. Fewer than one ifth of eligible Americans vote in primaries, lit-le more than half in presidential elections. (The Jnited States ranks 139th worldwide in nation-l voter turnout since 1945.) Business PAC mon-y goes twenty to one into the incumbent's pock-t. The old machines at least faced the voters vith something in their hands, dealing the goods ppropriately—spreading the wealth. The new Republican machine has no such need or interest; it benefits only itself, and as such, it is perhaps the purest of machines.

Broke, jobless, drinking too much, John O'Hara opened a copy of the *Daily News* on April 8, 2001, and saw a story about a poker-faced orty-six-year-old civil-rights lawyer named San-dra Roper, who had been fighting predatory enders in Brooklyn and once worked for the NAACP; the plates on her purple Chrysler said AS LAW 1. O'Hara telephoned Roper that evening nd was at her storefront office an hour later, itching a novel concept: he wanted to run her or district attorney of Brooklyn, against the man vho had prosecuted him.

"I didn't know this guy from Adam," Roper old me. "Then he starts telling me about his ar-est. 'I am a felon,' he says. 'Just want to clear that p.'" Roper was gracious and shook his hand, nd when he walked out the door, she turned to er associates and said, "Is this guy nuts or what?" Then she booted up her computer, dialed the In-ernet, and read his story, which struck a nerve. I was born in Panama, under dictatorship," Rop-r told me. "There was a time in that country vhen you could be at breakfast with your family nd by dinnertime they'd been disappeared and vere never coming back." The machine had tried o disappear O'Hara. Roper didn't like that.

O'Hara wanted to widen the ticket: Roper or D.A., plus at least one other black insurgent o weaken control of the locked judiciary, in vhich judges serve for decades unopposed. To-ether, the D.A. and the courts were the keys o power: the former controlled who went to rial and, more importantly, who didn't; a judge bought was justice compromised. Sandra Roper put out the call to her colleagues to join the ticket, but, fearing disbarment or worse, all of them declined. Desperate, John O'Hara appealed instead for the help of two outsiders who knew nothing about politics, who, like Roper, had never run for office and didn't know what they had to fear. Eileen Nadelson had been a schoolteacher, an entrepreneur, a journalist, had gone to law school at age forty, and at sixty-two was the long-time president of the New York League of Women Voters, which in 2001 filed an amicus brief in O'Hara's defense. That brief was written by a pot-bellied, bespectacled trial lawyer named Peter Sweeney, O'Hara's second judicial pick, who was a chef before he took up the law.

There wasn't a single paid operative on the Roper campaign. It felt, O'Hara thought, like his youth—like the race that got him into politics, George McGovern's doomed run of '72—except now the foot soldiers were black and Latino, old ladies in senior centers and new immigrants from violent regimes in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Central America: the future of the Brooklyn vote. Two hundred people petitioned for five weeks and got 12,839 signatures. In late July, Roper filed the big bound petition tomes at seven minutes to midnight on the day of the close of the petition season, arriving at the city Board of Elections in Manhattan in a caravan of ten vehicles packed with her followers, who hooted and cheered. Two blocks away, John O'Hara drank dollar drafts in a foul-smelling bar called the Blarney Stone.

The petitions were immediately challenged in court, and, as it unfolded over a month of vitriol and wrangling, the Roper trial was said to be the largest election-law matter in county history, with more than 10,000 signatures scrutinized. Anyone who had participated was brought in for questioning. There was a heat wave those long weeks, and the courtroom took on the hothouse rock-concert climate that breeds bad nerves and nausea: 300 people corralled, fifteen hours a day, past midnight, in a space not meant for a hundred. "These were ninety-two-year-old ladies brought in," Sandra Roper told me. "Treated like criminals. This was my neighbor across the street who was dying of cancer. They served my mother with a subpoena, and they served my father, who has been dead since 1989." Later, Roper was approached in a courthouse bathroom by a well-dressed woman, a stranger, who smiled and said, "Hear they're gonna disbar you, Sandra." Roper looked her in the eyes and said nothing.

The judge, Lewis Douglass, seemed to favor the prosecution, which was natural; Douglass was a heavy cash contributor to the Brooklyn Dem-

ocratic Party. Peter Sweeney, who led the defense, told me that "Douglass's attitude was, 'Don't say anything that'll change my mind.' Then we started cross-examining and scoring points and everyone's throwing their fists in the air. I wasn't even an election lawyer—I was flying blind. And I looked over at this wall of lawyers—ten of them—and for each of the lawyers, there were ten more people in the crowd from the D.A.'s office. They put everything they had into that case."

The month-long marathon ended on a Friday afternoon in late August, and Douglass's decision came out an hour later; of course he had ruled against the Roper slate. Now O'Hara and Sweeney had two days, the weekend, to summarize the monster of a transcript—1,600 pages, which cost $8,000 to purchase—and defend their ticket. They sweated like pigs, slept not at all, got so tired they were hearing voices. At 5:00 A.M. on Monday morning, they were at Kinko's binding briefs, each a hundred pages long, to be filed with the four justices of the New York State Appellate Division, who took three hours to come to a decision, the longest three hours of John O'Hara's life. Douglass had named him as the source and linchpin of the Roper "frauds," and as such O'Hara had committed a crime, violating his probation. If the appellate affirmed the Douglass court, O'Hara would have to be re-sentenced, and all expectations pointed to prison. In the most visceral sense, the life of the Roper campaign had become his own. O'Hara heard the news as he stood outside Sweeney's office in lower Manhattan; Sweeney walked out with his jacket off and shoulders slumped and with a sudden smile said, "Unanimous decision—case reversed. We won." The two big-bellied men yelled and jumped up and down in circles, "like twelve-year-old girls."

The celebration did not last long. When the votes were finally counted in late September, Roper lost the 2001 race for D.A., but for Hynes it was a classically Pyrrhic victory. An unknown, unfunded female had taken 37 percent of the vote, and voters don't trust women as prosecutors. The take-home message was that close to half the electorate would choose anybody other than Joe Hynes. Like O'Hara, Roper is being punished for her audacity. In June 2003 she was indicted in Brooklyn Supreme Court on what most observers agree is an unfounded charge of grand larceny. If convicted, she faces twelve years in prison. John O'Hara felt like it was his fault; he begged her forgiveness. "Hey," she said, "they warned me."

Vastly more important—though at the time few predicted it, least of all John O'Hara—was the impact of the Roper race on the shape of the Brooklyn judiciary, for Peter Sweeney and Eileen Nadelson had captured their judgeships against overwhelming odds (Sweeney by less than one half of a percent). Their collective victory was a seismic event. No one in living memory could testify to the last time a county wide judgeship had been won outside the ranks of the Democratic regular machine (and certainly no one in the reform machine had ever really tried). A year later, in 2002, a second wave of judicial insurgents swept Brooklyn; the O'Hara rebellion had raised the suggestion of vulnerability. By 2003 people were openly questioning the pay to play scam in the judiciary, the selling of judgeships that lay at the heart of the machine since the days of Meade Esposito. The noise wasn't the result of sudden ethical enlightenment but a rude calculation of interests. When prospective judges paid their tithe of $50,000 and $100,000, and the machine failed to deliver, they wondered what exactly they were paying for. Then the question became, Why pay at all? One observer told me, "When you factor over time the patronage lost with each lost judgeship"—the law secretaries, the fees to consultants and attorneys—"John O'Hara cost the machine millions of dollars."

John O'Hara is still picking up garbage and looking for the loophole that will unravel his conviction.* Legal scholars believe that *People* v. *O'Hara*, as affirmed in the highest courts, sets a dangerous precedent: New Yorkers now can be prosecuted as criminals for wrongly registering to vote. O'Hara still has no job; his girlfriend supports him; he hopes to be a lawyer again. Jim Brennan is in his twentieth year as a state assemblyman, plodding on with good intentions. John O'Hara has left him behind; he wants to take over the D.A.'s office. We drink in a crappy little bar. He counts the days and hours to 2005, when Joe Hynes is up for reelection. Sandra Roper, he predicts, will beat her case and then beat Hynes. He recalls what Hynes's election attorney had said of him in 2001, when his rebellion seemed such a terrific threat. "John O'Hara," he said, "has built his own little machine here, hasn't he?" If it was a revelation then, it's a lesson plan now. ■

**O'Hara may have one last long-shot chance in the court system in which he places so much faith. In reporting his story, I uncovered evidence that his prosecution was "selective" and "malicious"—that he was targeted prejudicially, with an "evil eye," the* mal occhio. *Among the chief criteria in arguing a motion of selective prosecution is to show that the prosecutor had knowledge of others committing the same crime but declined in those instances to prosecute. We need search no further than the prosecutor himself. "John's case, if successful, could destroy a lot of careers," Jim McCall, O'Hara's former lawyer, tells me. "Because then it goes to a civil countersuit, and everyone who has ever touched it gets called in a federal court under oath. Think of John O'Hara as a symbol of the concept of the relative present. John is a ripple from the past, traveling from that one event"—his registering to vote—"more than a decade ago."*

# WAR WOUNDS

## A father and son return to Vietnam

*By Tom Bissell*

In the beginning was the war. Many children of Vietnam veterans, when they look back on their adolescence, feel this with appropriately biblical conviction. *In the beginning was the war.* It sits there, in our fathers' pasts, a dying star that annihilates anything that strays too close. For the growing-up children of many vets the war's remoteness was all but impossible to gauge because it had happened pre-you, before you had come to grasp the sheer accident of your own placement in time, before you recognized that your reality—your bedroom, your toys and comic books—had nothing to do with the reality of your father. Despite its remoteness, however, the war's aftereffects were inescapably intimate. At every meal Vietnam sat down, invisibly, with our families.




My mother, who divorced my father when I was three, and whose father, a Marine Corps bird colonel, had introduced them, eventually could no longer handle the nightmares, the daymares, the never knowing which husband she would be experiencing at any given moment. My mother descends from a long medaled procession of military men. She understood men who had been to war. It was what men *did*. Whatever shadows war threw across the minds of its survivors—and it did, of course it did; she knew that—were to be borne stoically. But the war hero she married was capable of only fitful stoicism. This place he had returned from was not Normandy but a country that throughout the early years of their marriage became a tacit synonym for failure, savagery. Wars were supposed to end. And yet her war hero remained at war.

When I was a boy, I would dread the evenings my father had too much to drink, stole into my bedroom, woke me up, and for an hour at a time would try to explain to me, his ten-year-old son, why the decisions he made—decisions, he would mercilessly remind himself, that got his best friends killed—were the only decisions he could have made. Other nights he would remember fondly the various women he had courted in Vietnam, of which there seemed an extraordinary number, bringing to my still-unformed imagination bizarre images of myself as an Asian boy. With my school friends I would tell elaborate stories about my father. How he single-handedly fought off an entire garrison of "gooners." The day he got lost rafting down a river and survived a waterfall plunge. The time he was wounded and how a heroic black soldier dragged him to safety. Some were true; most were not. The war had not ended for him, and now it was alive in me.

Sometimes it feels as though Vietnam is all my father and I have ever talked about; sometimes it feels as though we have never really talked about it. My father trained as an officer at Quantico with the writer Philip

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Illustration by Jennifer Renninger

Caputo, with whom he has remained close and who ultimately became my literary mentor. My father even makes a brief appearance in Phil's *A Rumor of War*, which is commonly regarded as one of the finest memoirs of the conflict and was the first Vietnam book to become a major bestseller. When in *A Rumor of War* Phil learns of the death of his and my father's friend Walter Levy, who survived all of two weeks in Vietnam, he remembers a night in Georgetown when he, Levy, and some others went to a bar "to drink and look at girls and pretend we were still civilians." And then this: "We sat down and filled the glasses, all of us laughing, probably at something Jack Bissell said. Was Bissell there that night? He must have been, because we were all laughing very hard and Bissell was always funny." I still remember the first time I read that sentence and how my heart had convulsed. Here was the man of whom I had never had as much as a glimpse, whose life had not yet been hewn by so much darkness, the man I did not find in bluish 2:00 A.M. darkness drinking wine and watching *Gettysburg* or *Platoon* for the fortieth time. In *A Rumor of War* I saw the still normal man my father could have become, a man with the average sadnesses.

When I was young I used to stare at his framed purple heart ("the dumb medal," he calls it) and, next to it, a photo of my father from his training at Quantico. BISSELL is stenciled across his left breast. Friendly Virginia greenery hovers behind him. He looks a little like a young Harrison Ford and is smiling, holding his rifle, his eyes unaccountably soft. I wanted to find that man. I believed I could find him in Vietnam, where he had been made and unmade, killed and resurrected. When over the phone I told my father I had tickets, we could leave in a few months, he was quiet, as quiet as I had ever heard him. "Gosh," he said.

We have been driving for several hours, down the coast, along surprisingly well-maintained roads, through what feels like lush green tunnels of Vietnamese countryside. My father is making satisfied little [illegible] in Ho Chi Minh City's airport, where we spend [illegible] arrival before lighting off for Hué in central Vietnam.

"Interesting trick," I ask.

His head lifts with birdlike alertness, and he looks over at me. "I'm just enjoying this cultural exchange." When he finishes memorizing the contents of the *Viet Nam News* he peppers our translator, Hien, with questions such as, "Is that a pigeon?" "Are those tea farmers?" "Is that sugarcane?" "When was this road built?" "Do the Vietnamese use much solar power?"

"So how do you feel?" I ask him, after Hien has debriefed him on the overall impact of rice exports upon the Vietnamese economy.

"Marvelous," he tells me. "Super. I'm having a ball."

"You're sure you're up for seeing some of your old stomping grounds?"

He fixes upon me a crumply-eyed look, his mouth cast in the same emotionally undecided frown that I have noticed, with increasing frequency, in recent photographs of myself. "It was a long time ago. I'll be fine."

We pass through the rural sprawl of several villages. I see women wearing conical peasant hats, huge vase-shaped wicker baskets full of rice, all the stage-dressing clichés of the Vietnam War. Yet these are not VC women, and no G.I. will be along to bayonet the rice baskets in search of hidden ordnance. The clichés mean nothing. They are not even clichés but rather staples of Vietnamese life. I have discerned already that the war informs much here but defines little, and it suddenly seems very strange that we refer to the Vietnam War, a phrase whose adjectivelessness grows more bizarre as I ponder it. It manages to take an entire nation and plunge it into perpetual conflict.

"Where are we?" I ask after a while.

"We are nearing the Hai Van Pass," Hien says, pointing ahead to where the road [illegible] and screws up into the Truong Son mountain range. To our left the wall of black, long-needled pine trees suddenly breaks to reveal a steep drop. Beyond the cliff's edge is the blue infinity of the South China Sea, a whitecapped chaos so astonishingly choppy I half expect to see the face of Yahweh moving across it.

At the top of the pass we are stopped in a mild traffic jam, and my father gets out of the car to take pictures. I follow him. It feels cold enough up here to snow, the clouds soppingly low. When he wants some photos of himself he hands me his camera.

I stare at this relic, called a Yashica FX-7.

"I had that camera with me," he announces proudly, "the first time I came to Vietnam."

"*This* is the camera you took all those slides with?" The John C. Bissell Vietnam Slide Show was a staple of my Michigan childhood. "Dad, this camera is thirty-eight years old!"

He looks at me. "No it isn't." His hand lifts and bats about frivolously. "It's . . . what? Thirty-two years old."

"It's thirty-eight years old, Dad. Almost *forty*."

"No, it's not, because 1960 plus forty years is 2000. I arrived in 1965, so—"

"So 2005 minus two is today."

My father is silent. Then all at once his color goes. "Oh my God. Holy shit."

"Kinda incredible, isn't it?"

"I didn't know I was that old until just now."

He is worriedly touching his face as I line him up in the viewfinder.

On the other side of the Hai Van Pass, Vietnam grows more tropical, a great rotting chromatic extravagance of jungle and rice paddies. A thick mist hovers above these calm, endless reaches of standing water. Water buffalo the size of small dinosaurs are sunk to their flanks in the mud nearby, while rice farmers wearing condom-like body bags wade through chest-deep water holding bundled nets above their heads.

After a while we stop, at my insistence, at the Son My Memorial, which is a few miles outside the city of Quang Ngai. Son My is a subdistrict that is

divided into several hamlets, the most famous of which is My Lai. It was in a part of My Lai where, in 1968, the most notorious U.S. war crimes against Vietnamese villagers took place: anywhere between 150 and 570 unarmed civilians were butchered with astonishingly versatile brutality. My father did not want to come here, for various reasons, some easily grasped, others less so. One of the "less so" reasons is my father's somewhat unaccountable friendliness with Captain Ernest Medina, who commanded Company C, the unit within the 11th Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division responsible for the majority of the My Lai killings. Medina, a Native American whose promising military career was garroted by My Lai, eventually wound up settling in northern Wisconsin, and my father would see him occasionally. My father maintains that Medina is a "great guy" who claims to have given no order for what happened and has no explanation for it. On the way here my father grumpily said that what I did not understand was that things like My Lai happened all the time, only on a much smaller scale. I looked at him, astonished. I knew what he meant, and he knew that I knew what he meant, but to hear him say those words—their buried tolerance for murder—was very nearly too much. I could have asked, and almost did: *Did you ever do anything like that?* But I did not ask, because no father should be lightly posed such a question by his son. Because no father should think, even for a moment, that his son believes him capable of such a thing. Because I know my father is not capable of such a thing. So I am telling myself as we pull up to Son My.

Two tour buses are already parked here, both decorated with a splashy porpoise motif. I walk up to a large wooden sign that lists "The Regulations of Son My Vestige Area": "Visitors are not allowed to bring explosive powder, flaming, reating substances, poison or weapons into the museum. Also you should inform and stop any anti-attitudes toward this historical relic." The grounds are marked by a series of tall, wind-hissing palm trees, cobbled paths, and cubically sheared evergreen hedges and statuary, harrowing statuary: staggering gut-shot peasant women, beseeching children, defiant raised fists. These are the first instances of Communist sculpture that I have ever seen that do not produce an instant impulse to have at them with a jackhammer. Meanwhile my father is studying a headstone that lists the names and ages of some Son My victims.

"What don't you see?" he asks me as I join him.

One column of victims' ages works out like this: 12, 10, 8, 6, 5, 46, 14, 45. Most are women. "I don't see any young men."

"THIS WHOLE THING WAS PROBABLY A REVENGE MISSION. THEY PROBABLY SAID, 'WE'RE GONNA TEACH 'EM A LESSON,' SO THEY MASSACRED EVERYONE"

"That's because none of the young men were around. This was a VC village."

"Dad. *Dad.*"

"It's just an observation. This whole thing was probably a revenge mission. Actually, I know it was. They probably said, 'We're gonna teach 'em a lesson,' so they massacred everyone. Which is a slight violation of every rule and regulation both moral, written, military, and civilian."

As we walk over to the museum, I notice that the palm trees are marked with little plaques to denote the still visible bullet holes the soldiers fired into them during the massacre. ("Kill some trees!" was, among American soldiers in Vietnam, the equivalent of "Fire at will!") "Good Christ," my father says quietly, stopping to finger one palm tree's spiderwebbed bullet hole. His face is suddenly spectral. "Five hundred people . . ."

The museum is filled with tourists, most of them older Europeans, all of whom are walking around, looking at the exhibits, with something like cosmic dread splashed across their faces. I look at a photo of a man who has been thrown into a well, his shiny brain visible through the hole in his skull, and feel that same dread take up residence upon my own face. More photos: a skinny man cut in two by machine-gun fire, a woman with her brains neatly piled beside her. In an adjacent room is a rogues' gallery of My Lai perpetrators, huge blowups of badly Xeroxed photocopies, the pixels as big as dimes. Let their last names stand: Calley, Bernhardt, Hodges, Reid, Widmer, Simpson, and Medina, at his court martial, at which he was acquitted. (Most of the men directly responsible for the My Lai massacres had been discharged by the time the story broke; the arm of military justice is particularly short, and they were never brought to trial at all.) There are also photos of Lawrence Colburn and Hugh Thompson and Herbert Carter. The former two were helicopter crewmen who managed to maintain a grip on their humanity and choppered out a handful of civilians during the slaughter. The latter is said to have pumped a round into his own foot during the massacre to avoid taking part—the operation's only casualty. Colburn's and Thompson's Soldier's Medals for heroism are also on display here, though far less conspicuously.

I see my father ducking out with Hien, both of them gray and punched-looking, and I begin to follow after them when behind me I hear a heavily accented German voice declaim, "I have been to Auschwitz, and it is moving, but this is so much *more* moving, *ja?*" I turn. The people this German woman is speaking to are Canadians.

"Excuse me?" I less say than hear myself saying.

She looks at me unapologetically. She is wearing a chunky jade necklace I have seen being sold on the streets. "More moving. Because of the life. The life around this place." She is waving her hands, which are long and thin skeleton hands, while the Canadians stealthily take their leave.

Although I am fairly sure this constitutes some form of "anti-attitude," I do not report her. I do not say anything and stalk off outside. I find Hien and my father standing by the ditch in which many of the victims of the My Lai massacre were dumped. Nearby is a *Guernica*-style mural with death-spraying choppers and wicked-faced American soldiers looming over defenseless Vietnamese women and children. The ditch itself is not very big,

long, or wide, and is largely grown over with scrub.

"Why would one man," Hien is saying, "like Calley, kill, while another man, like Colburn, try to prevent it? What is the difference?"

My father is staring into the ditch. "It's just . . . war," he tells Hien. Hien nods, but I know he is not satisfied by this. I am not satisfied by this. Neither, it seems, is my father. "I guess what it comes down to," he goes on, searchingly, "is discipline." After Hien leaves, my father rubs his chest through his shirt. "My heart hurts."

"Yeah," I say.

"I've seen American Marines take revenge, but they just killed men, not women and children. It's horrible. When I came here we were . . . we were like crusaders! We were going to help people. We were going to make their lives better, give them democracy. And the way we did it was so morally . . ." He sighs, rubs his mouth, shakes his head, all the willful gestures of sense-making. My Lai happened two years after my father left Vietnam. The Vietnam War of 1966 was not the Vietnam War of 1968, which had by then scythed down whole fields of men and goodwill, including that of the war's own planners and originators. Kennedy, McNamara, Johnson: by 1968 all had fallen. I think about the story my father once told me about how he had been asked to transport a Vietcong prisoner by helicopter to the village of Tam Ky. He described this prisoner as "a little guy who's terrified, frightened to death, tied up, but still bucking and heaving. And he fought and he fought and he fought for forty-five minutes. He knew he was going to be thrown out of the helicopter. He *knew* that. So we arrived in Tam Ky, and they asked me, 'What'd you learn?' I said, 'I learned that this little guy wants to kill me because he thought I was going to pitch him out of the helicopter!' And goddamnit, at one point I was about to." We had both laughed, grimly. War stories. My father would not have been capable of throwing a bound man from a helicopter, under any circumstances. But I imagine him—I imagine myself—here in My Lai during those first moments of [illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible] itself up in the [illegible] and [illegible] centerless, and I [illegible] the [illegible] range of possibilities that [illegible]

My father suddenly looks up across this miserable ditch into a verdant neighboring pasture. "I wish Hien were here." I'd be brave, finally, a better answer for him as to why only some men kill while others think to save. No, actually. He wants to know if that is corn or wheat growing over there or what.

"What does your father do?"

A question young men are asked all the time. Women in particular ask it of young men, I suppose in the spirit of a kind of secular astrology. Who will you be in ten years, and do I want to be involved? The common belief is that every young man, like the weeping Jesus of Gethsemane, has two choices when it comes to his father: rejection or emulation. In some ways my father and I could not be more different. While I have inherited his sense of humor, his love of loyalty, and his lycanthropically hairy back, I am my mother's child in all matters of commerce and emotion. I am terrible with money, weep over nothing, and typically feel before I think. I can anticipate my mother because her heart is mine. My father remains more mysterious.

What does my father do? I have always answered it thus: "My father is a Marine." This typically results in a pinch-faced look of sympathy. But the truth is, my father and I get along. We have not always gotten along—I maintained a solid D average in high school, he viewed my determination to be a writer (at least initially) as a dreamer's errand, and marooned in our history are various wrecked Chevys and uncovered marijuana caches—but we have always been close. As I get older, I have noticed the troubles many of my friends have with their fathers: the animosities and disappointments, held so long in the throes of late adolescence, suddenly coming up due on both ends. But my father and I, if anything, have gotten closer, even as I understand him less and less.

My father is a Marine. But how poorly that captures him. He is not a tall man, but he is so thin he appears tall. His head is perfectly egg shaped, which accounts for my brother's and my nickname for him: Egghead. (Although nothing explains his nicknames for us: Ringworm and Remus.) His ducklike gait, a strange combination of the gooty and the determined, sees his big floppy feet inclined outward at forty-five degree angles. (I used to make fun of him for this until a girlfriend pointed out to me that I walk precisely the same way.) My father, then, was no Great Santini, no knight templar of bruising manhood. During the neighborhood basketball games of my childhood, which were played in our driveway, my father, for instance, unforgivably shot granny-style free throws. "Hugs and kisses" is how he used to announce that he was putting me to bed. I unselfconsciously kissed my father until I was in high school, when some friends busted me for it: "You kiss your *dad?*" But we fought all the time. I do not mean argue. I mean we *fought*. I would often announce my presence by punching him hard on the shoulder, whereupon he would put me in a full nelson until I sang the following song, which for years I believed he had made up: "Why this feeling?/Why this joy?/Because you're near me, oh you fool./Mister Wonderful, that's you." The torment was not just physical. When I was very young my father would tell me he invented trees and fought in the Civil War, and would laugh until he had tears in his eyes when my teachers called home to upbraid him. In return my brother and I simply besieged the poor man, pouring liquid Ex-Lax into his coffee before work, loading his cigarettes with tiny slivers of treated pine that exploded after a few drags. One went off in a board meeting at his bank, another while he was on his way to church, sending him up onto the curb. He always got us back. In high school I brought a date over and was showing off with my smart-aleckry, only to be knocked to the floor by my father and held down while he rubbed pizza all over my face and called our dogs over to

ck it off. There was, needless to say, o second date.

But my father is a Marine. He ould be cruel. After a high-school arty that left his house demolished nd our Christmas presents stolen, I ought him out to tell him I was orry, that I loved him. "No," he aid, not even looking at me as he wept up the glass from a broken icture frame. "I don't think you o." We owned a large stuffed iplodocus named Dino, which beame a kind of makeshift couch we sed to prop ourselves against while vatching television, for my father vas the kind of father who got lown on the floor with his children. Once, resting against Dino while we vatched *Sands of Iwo Jima*, I asked ny father what it felt like to get vounded. He looked at me, grabbed he flesh of my forearm, and pinched ne so hard sudden tears slickened ny eyes. I returned fire by callously sking him if he had ever killed anyone. I was ten or eleven, and my old, hurt little stare drilled into his, heer will being one of the few human passions ungoverned by age. He looked away first.

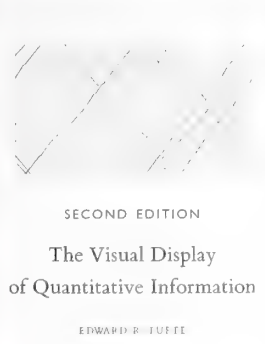
He is a Marine. To this I attributed much of the sheer insanity of growing up with him. He once shot a flaming arrow into his brother's front door, just for instance. Every July Fourth he would take it upon himself to destroy his neighbor's garbage cans by filling them with fireworks and a splash of gasoline, always igniting the concoction by daintily tossing in a cigarette smoked down to its filter. Another neighbor deposited half a dozen garter snakes into our bathtub; my father responded by taking the snakes over to the neighbor's house and calmly stuffing them under his bedspread. Once, at dinner, Phil Caputo recounted a story of my father drunkenly commandeering a tour bus in Key West, Florida, flooring it across a crowded parking lot while his passengers, about seventy touring seniors, screamed. Only later did I realize that Phil did not live in Key West until the early 1980s—which would have made my father a forty-year-old bus thief.

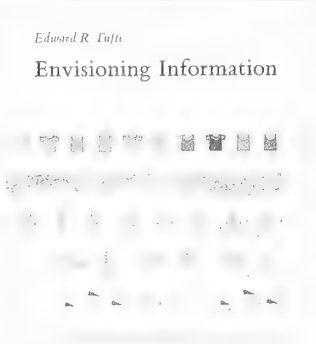
I joined the Peace Corps after college and quickly washed out. The mansion of my father's disappointment had many rooms, and even now I cannot much stand to reread the letters he sent me as I was preparing to come home. They are loving, they are cruel, they are the letters of a man who fiercely loves his son, and whose own past is so painful he forgets, sometimes, that suffering is a misfortune some of us are forced to experience rather than a human requirement. But what have I done with my life? I have become a writer greatly interested in sites of human suffering. And lately it occurs to me that this has been my own attempt to approximate something of what my father went through.

During the war in Afghanistan, I got stuck in Mazar-i-Sharif with dangerously low funds and one friend, Michael, a Danish journalist I had followed into the war. Even though I had all the proper credentials, the Uzbek border patrol turned us back three times in a row. We had brought only enough money for


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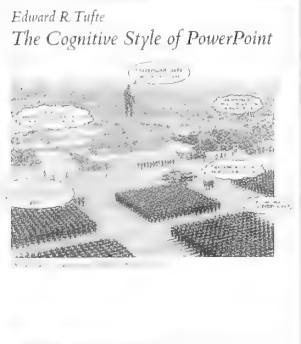
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a few days, and, at fifty dollars a ride from Mazar to the border, we were running out of options. I called my father on the borrowed satellite phone of an Associated Press journalist. It was Christmas Eve in Michigan, and he and my stepmother were alone, probably waiting for my brother or me to call. He had no idea I was in Afghanistan, since I had promised I was going to stay in Uzbekistan. My father picked up after one ring, his voice edged with joy.

"Dad, please listen because I don't have much time. I'm stuck in Afghanistan. I don't have any money. I may need you to make some calls. Did you hear me?"

The link was quiet but for a faint, cold static.

"Dad?"

"I heard you," he said quietly.

At this, at hearing him, my eyes went hot. "I'm in trouble, I think."

"Have they hurt you?"

In a moment I went from boyishly sniveling to nearly laughing. "No one's hurt me, Dad. I'm just worried."

"Are you speaking code? Tell me where you are." His panic, preserved perfectly after its journey through cloud and space and the digital guts of some tiny metal moon, beamed down and hit me with all the force of an actual voice.

"Dad, I'm not a *captive*, I'm—" But he was gone. The line was silent, the satellite having glided into some nebula of link-terminating interference. I chose not to ponder the state in which my father would spend the remainder of his Christmas, though I later learned he spent it falling apart. And for a short while, at least, the unimaginable had become my life, not his. I was him, and he was me.

My father and I make our way down a bright beach in the city of Qui Nhon. The previous night we drank gallons of Tiger beer, and I find myself comparing my constitution to his. My father imbibes a fraction of what he used to, but he still possesses the iron disposition every alcoholic needs if he or she seeks to make a life out of it. I look and smell as though I have endured a night in a halfway-house urinal, whereas he looks and smells as though he has just had a [illegible] chanted flowerbed. I am reminded of the various times I had, while growing up, seen my father triumphantly insensate after a bottle of Johnnie Walker Red, wearing only underwear and a winter jacket, off to do some 3:00 A.M. snow shoveling. Mere hours later he would be rosy pink and whistling as he knotted his tie before work. Constitutionally, I am not this man's spawn, and here on the beach he puts my back at risk by heaving me into some bushes.

Qui Nhon is where my father washed ashore with 3,[illegible] thousand other Marines in April 1965, one month after the deployment, in Danang, of the first American Marines sent to Southeast Asia explicitly as combat troops. The April battalions were dispatched at the bidding of General William Westmoreland, who sought to bring the war to the Vietcong. Marines would no longer stand impotent guard beside airports and radio towers and hospitals but would hunt down and kill Vietcong insurgents. (This plan did not work. One estimate holds that almost 90 percent of the skirmishes that resulted from search-and-destroy tactics were initiated by enemy troops.) Many expected a quick victory, since everyone knew the VC and North Vietnamese Army could not withstand America's superior firepower. Others braced themselves for a long, ugly fight. My father, like nearly all young Marines of the time, possessed the former belief.

It takes us fifteen minutes' worth of beachcombing to find the site of his landing: a thin stand of coastline palm trees, miraculously unaltered since 1965, hardens his memory into place. We stand looking out on the endless sea in a black grid of shadows cast by the cranes and scaffolds of the resort being built a few dozen yards away. I begin asking him questions, but very gently he asks if I might not give him a moment. Instantly I realize my error. He cannot talk right now, and he stares out at the ocean in both confusion and recognition. I fall silent. This is where the man I know as my father was born. It is as though he is looking upon himself through a bloody veil of memory.

"They told us this was going to be [illegible] at Landing," he says after a while. "To expect the very worst. The ships we were in flooded them[illegible] decks, and the landing craft and amphibious vehicles swam off. We came ashore, heavily armed, locked and cocked, ready to go to war. We had tanks and trucks and Ontos."

"Ontos?"

"Lightly armored vehicles mounted with six recoilless rifles. They shot all kinds of ammunition. Armor piercing. Anti personnel ammunition. Willy Peter, which is white phosphorus, one of the most deadly things you could ever get hit with. When the shell explodes, it sprays white phosphorus, and if you put water on it, it flares right up. It's oxygen-fed, and you have to take mud and smother it. Lovely weapon."

"How old were you with all this at your disposal?"

"I was twenty-three years old. A platoon leader. But I was also the company commander, and I had all of the infantry and supply people under me. I was probably one of the youngest company commanders in Vietnam—if not the youngest." Of this, I can tell, he is still proud. "Everyone was cheering us. It was glorious. That's my biggest frustration when I talk to people who weren't here. They'll say, 'Nobody really wanted us to come to Vietnam.' Well, they sure as hell welcomed us with open arms."

"When did it start to go bad?"

He points to the hills beyond Qui Nhon—an arcadia of rough, beautiful triangles of fuzzy jade and sharp spurs of exposed white rock, a few white waterfalls pouring sparklingly down the hills' faces. "Those look beautiful, but the VC were there, as we found out. It took only two days before we were fired on. We were so inexperienced, we were shooting ourselves at first. One guy, tragically, fell asleep on watch and turned himself around in his foxhole. He woke up, saw people, and opened fire. Killed the rest of his fire team."

In Vietnam, and especially during the war's opening innings, American soldiers experienced chaotic fighting unlike any they had ever seen before. There was no land to take, no

front to hold, and few opportunities to glory in the routing of the enemy. All-out battles were few and far between, and enemy combatants perpetually melted away into the forest only to reappear, in the minds of increasingly (and understandably) jittery American soldiers, in the form of putatively innocent villagers.

As we drive on to the village of Tuy Phouc, I ask my father about his severance between the kind of fighting he was trained to do and the kind of fighting the VC forced him to engage in. "The VC," he says, "would not close with us. They didn't have the firepower. And we knew that if they made a stand against us, they would lose ass, hat, and fixtures. So they would pick on our patrols." He is agitated now, and stares with cool determination out his window. Tuy Phouc, the village we are headed to, is where my father was wounded.

He points out the window at the railroad track that runs contiguous to the road, found on an elevated mound of packed sod perhaps eight feet high. "See that? That's what we used to hide behind, as a fortified position." At this he enjoys a chuckle.

"How many firefights were you in?"

"A dozen, twenty. They would last anywhere from ten seconds to two hours. Then the VC would break off and disappear. We lost a tremendous number of people trying to save our wounded and retrieve our bodies. And they knew it. They knew we would. That's how Walt Levy died, you know: trying to haul someone out of a rice paddy who was wounded."

"I'm sensing some anxiety here. You're sweating."

"Really?" He touches his temple, a lagoon of perspiration. He quickly wipes his fingers on his shirt. "Well, maybe a little."

"How do you feel about the Vietcong now?"

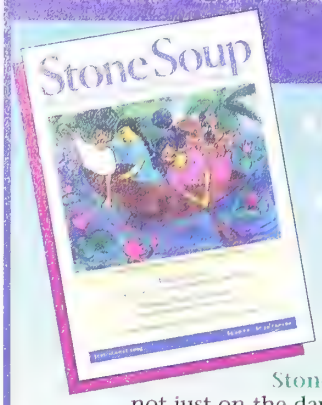
He looks at his camera as he turns it over in his hands. "We were all soldiers. They suffered terribly, you know, compared to us. Brave people. Committed. To their country. We sort of . . . lost that."

"I'm sorry," I say, surprising myself.

"Yeah," he says. "Me too."



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Tuy Phouc is less a village than a series of islands spread across a large plain now completely flooded by the seasonal rains. We ride among these islands along a long straight road that clears the greedy waterline by only a few inches. Each island is a little node of Swiss Family Robinson–type existence: a modest house, a collapsing wooden fence, a damp sandy yard, a small dock, a wooden boat tied up to it. Plastic bags and limp old bicycle-tire linings hang with obscure meaning from the branches of several trees. My father mentions that forty years ago all of these houses were thatched huts. Hien jumps in to say, with some pride, that the government has been building and modernizing all of Vietnam's villages since the war ended in 1975.

The road is narrow and crammed with pedestrians; above, the sky seems a spacious gray cemetery of dead clouds. The surrounding floodwater is tea-colored where it is deep and green where it is shallow. "Vietcong villages," my father suddenly says, looking around at Tuy Phouc's islands. "All of these." We finally park when the road is too flooded out to continue and stand next to the car. My father was wounded, he thinks, perhaps a hundred yards ahead of where we have been forced to stop. He is visibly rattled and lights up a cigarette to distract himself. On either side of the road stands a crowd of Vietnamese. They call to one another across the water, waving and laughing. Every few minutes some brave soul mounts a scooter charge through the flood, the water parting before his tires with Mosaic instantaneity.

Tuy Phouc, I gather, is not much of a tourist town, and for the most part we are left alone. But nearly everyone is looking at us. The people of Tuy Phouc are short and damp and suntanned in a vaguely unhealthy way. The women smile, the men nod civilly, and the children rush at us before thinking better of it and retreat behind their mothers' legs.

"You want to tell me what happened?" This is mostly a courtesy, since I know what happened. My father's version of his [illegible] originally, and I should say the accounting of a trouble-maker and [illegible] by a black soldier. One of the things I had long admired about my father was his absence of racial animosity—a fairly uncommon trait among the men of rural Michigan. I always attributed this to the black Marine who saved his life. I identically credited my youthful stridency on racial matters—I was forever jumping down the throats of my parents' dinner guests or high-school friends whenever the word "nigger" made its unlovely entrance from stage right—to this same mysterious savior.

"We were on a search-and-destroy mission," my father explains. "We entered Tuy Phouc in a convoy. After twenty minutes of driving we found the road was cut by a huge earthen mound. The VC obviously knew we were coming, so we were all very suspicious. I was at the head of the convoy and called up the engineers. They were going to blow up the mound and rebuild the road so we could continue. About fifteen men came up, and I turned around to talk to the gunnery sergeant from the lead infantry company, and the mound exploded. Inside the dirt they'd packed a bunch of steel and shrapnel. The only reason I'm here is that I turned around to speak to the gunnery sergeant. I remember saying, 'Gunny, I'll go back and get some more equipment.' You know, shovels, stuff like that. The bomb caught Gunny in the face, and I went flying through the air. Then I tried to get up. Couldn't. There were people lying all over the place. I think fifteen were wounded. Gunny was the only guy killed. My platoon sergeant hauled me into a ditch, and they field-dressed me and jammed me full of morphine and then flew in the choppers. I was very fucked up, in total shock. I had two hundred separate wounds. They counted 'em. My left arm caught the brunt of the blast. I thought they were going to have to take it off. So that ended my war for a while."

"Wait a minute," I say. "I thought you were shot."

"No, I never got shot. Which is fine by me."

"But that's not the story you told [illegible]."

[illegible] me. "I don't think I ever told you that story."

"Then why do I remember you being shot, and a black Marine dragging you [illegible] to safety?"

"I have no idea."

"Was the sergeant who pulled you into the ditch black?"

"I don't think so. I honestly don't remember."

My father's sleeve is rolled up and I am now looking at his left arm. Incredibly, I have never before noticed the scoring of crosshatched scar tissue running up and down his forearm, or how thinner his left arm seems compared with his right. I have, however, many times noticed the bright, pink nickel-sized scars on his bicep and his shoulder blade, the small keloidal lightning bolt on his neck. When I was young I used to stare at these obvious wounds and, sometimes, even touch them, my tiny fingers freshly alive to their rubbery difference in texture. But I have to admit, now, that I do not actually remember my father ever telling me he was shot, or that a black man had saved his life. I remember telling that story myself, but I do not remember being told that story. At some point the story simply appears in my mind. Why did I create this story? Because it made my father heroic? In the emergency of growing up we all need heroes. But the father I grew up with was no hero to me, not then. He was too wounded in the head, too endlessly far and terribly sad. Too funny, too explosive, too confusing. Heroes are uncomplicated. *This* makes them do *that*. The active heroism of my imaginary black Marine made a passive hero of my father; they huddled together, alongside a road in the Vietnam of my mind, shrouded in nitroglycerin, the cordite of gallantry. The story made sense of the senseless. But war does not make sense. War senselessly wounds everyone right down the line. A body bag fits more than just its intended corpse. Take the 58,000 American soldiers lost in Vietnam and multiply by four, five, six—and only then does one begin to realize the damage this

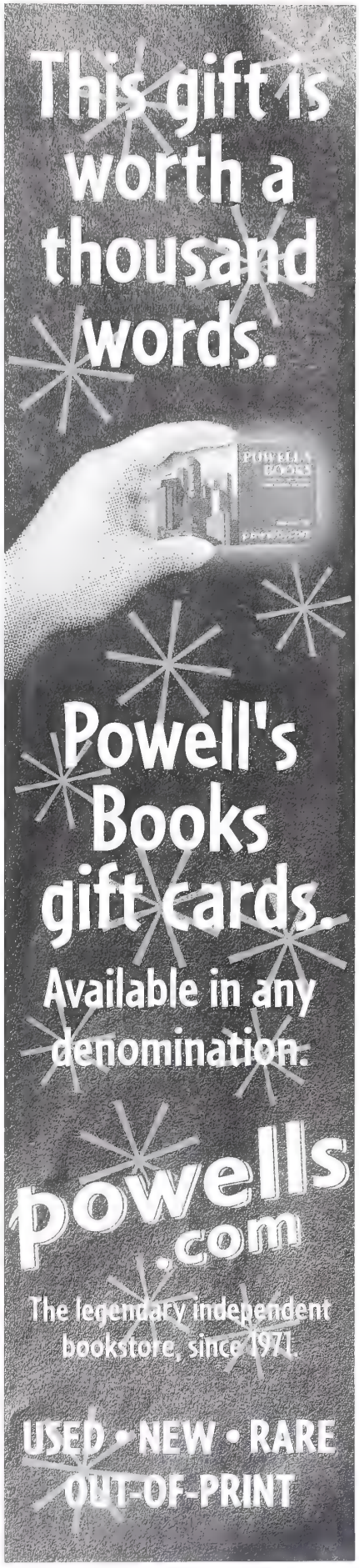
war has done. (Project outward from the 2 million slain Vietnamese and see, for the first time, an entire continent of loss.) War, when necessary, is unspeakable. When unnecessary, it is unforgivable. It is not an occasion for heroism. It is an occasion only for survival and death. To regard war in any other way only guarantees its inevitable reappearance.

I look at my father, who is still smoking and peering around. Suddenly he appears very old. He does not look bad. He is in fact in better physical shape than I, but he is older-looking than I have ever seen him before. His neck has begun to give up and sag, his eyes are bigger and more yellowy, the long wolfish hair at the base of his throat is gray. I am twenty-nine, six years older than my father was when he was wounded. Can I really know the young man who went flying through the air, ripped apart by a booby trap? Can I even know this man, still flying, and in some ways still ripped apart? Ultimately our lives are only partially ours. The parts of our lives that change most are those that intrude with mythic vividness into the lives of those we love: our parents, our children, our brothers and sisters. As these stories overlap they change, but we have no voice in how or why. One by one our stories are dragged away from us, pulled into the ditches of shared human memory. They are saved, but they are changed. One day my father will be gone except for the parts of him I remember and the stories he has told me. How much else about him have I gotten wrong? How much of him have I not properly understood? What have I not asked? And looking at him I want him never to go. I want him always to be here. There is too much left for us to talk about.

At last, a lone Vietnamese man shoelessly wanders over to say hello. His hairless legs and arms are so thin and brown they look made of teak. As he and my father shake hands and (with Hien's assistance) chat, I realize that this man is around my father's age. It is in fact not at all beyond possibility that this man personally wired the booby trap that nearly killed my father. But his solar friendliness is not feigned, and beneath its insistent emotional heat I can see my father's discomfort soften and wilt. Within moments the man and my father are laughing over something together.

I listen to my father and his new Vietnamese friend talk respectfully around the small matter of having taken up arms against each other as young men: Yes, my father *has* been to Vietnam before; no, the Vietnamese man did not always live in the south. Their conversation slides into a respectful silence, and they nod and look at each other. With a smile, the man suddenly asks my father what brings him to Tuy Phoc, since it is so far away from anything of note. For a long time my father thinks about how to answer, looking up at the low gray clouds, a few small trapezoids of blue showing through. To Hien he finally says, "Tell him . . . tell him that, a very long time ago, I got hurt here."

Once, while hunting partridge, which I did not like to do, my father abandoned me after I maintained I was not going another step until he gave me a granola bar. He refused, I stopped, and off he went. I was probably twelve years old. It was a cold fall day, witchy orange-yellow leaves blew all around me, and, as the moments turned to minutes and the minutes to hours, I sat down on a log and began to despair. Trees grew taller, the air colder; the forest was an endless organic mirror of my fear. I do not remember how long I was alone. After the sky had darkened, after I had turned up my collar and drawn myself into a defenseless ball on the forest floor, my father burst through some bushes on a different path than that by which he had left me and gathered me up into his arms. He was crying. He had gotten "turned around," he said quickly. Not lost. My father never got lost. He was a Marine. He said nothing else; neither did I. I held him, and he held me, and he carried me out of the forest. ■



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# THE U.N. IS US

## *Exposing Saddam Hussein's silent partner*

## *By Joy Gordon*

The Bush Administration was still reeling from the revelations about Abu Ghraib prison his year when supporters of the President suddenly took note of a dramatic new scandal involving Iraq. "The richest rip-off in world history," wrote William Safire; "fraud and deception that probably resulted in the deaths of thousands of Iraqis through malnutrition," said Republican congressman Ralph Hall. The object of his ire was not Halliburton or any bungling by U.S. forces, nor was it a rogue nation or leader or any terrorist group. Instead, the loss of billions of dollars and countless Iraqi lives was laid at the feet of the United Nations.

"HOW HUSSEIN STOLE BILLIONS UNDER THE EYE OF THE U.N.'S OIL-FOR-FOOD PROGRAM," was the headline in the *New York Times*. In the hearings he chaired in July, Congressman Hall spoke of "the trail of corruption unfolding on the world stage," and introduced a speaker whose book on the U.N. is entitled *Inside the Asylum*. In both houses of Congress, legislation calling for the withholding of U.N. dues is pending.

The current criticism is based mainly on an April report by the General Accounting Office, as well as on a list published in January by the Iraqi newspaper *Al-Mada*, identifying those who received vouchers to buy oil from Iraq. The heart of the GAO's accusation is that "from 1997 through 2002 . . . the former Iraqi regime acquired $10.1 billion in illegal revenues related to the Oil for Food program." Most recently, the Duelfer report, commissioned by the CIA, provided a more detailed version of the accusations. Given the elaborate safeguards built into the Oil for Food Programme, critics argued, how could such a theft occur without complicity?



It may turn out that particular individuals in the U.N. did receive payoffs from Iraq in the form of oil vouchers. But fraudulent acts by individuals —in direct violation of their employer's policies—are not the same thing as institutional failure. The U.N. barred employees from engaging in financial transactions with Iraq. And if Iraq's government used the Oil for Food Programme to get cash under the table from its business partners, then we should look at who designed the program in the first place.

What seems to be consistently overlooked—not only by right-wing pundits but at congressional hearings and in the *New York Times*—is a distinction of enormous significance: the U.N. is being attacked for the policies and failures of particular member nations. The Oil for Food Programme was not some concoction of Kofi Annan's. It was created by a vote of the members of the Security Council. And every aspect of how the program ran—what goods were allowed, the monitoring procedures, the transfer of funds, everything—was explicitly established by the members of the Security Council. Kofi Annan did not have a vote; but the United States and Britain did, and they approved of every resolution and decision that determined how the Oil for Food Programme worked. Whatever critics may say, "the U.N. bureaucracy" did not design a program that handed over cash to Saddam Hussein. The fifteen members

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Illustrations by Tim Bower

of the Security Council—of which the United States was by far the most influential—determined how income from oil proceeds would be handled, and what the funds could be used for. The U.N.'s personnel operating the Oil for Food Programme did not set these policies. They simply executed the program that was designed by the members of the Security Council.

For the most part, the U.N. has not publicly defended itself. There is an internal investigation, led by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, and U.N. staff are making few public comments until the investigation is complete. Ironically, if it is true that Saddam Hussein's government smuggled and skimmed such vast amounts, much of the blame can be laid at the feet of the United States. For over a decade U.S. representatives have dominated decisions and actions regarding Iraq by the Security Council and its fifteen-member 661 Committee.* The committee operated by consensus, effectively giving each member veto power, a power the United States has made liberal use of. The United States is also on record as the committee member that most consistently and actively scrutinized Iraq's dealings under the Oil for Food Programme. Scrutiny of the country's physical borders—both land and sea—has also been dominated by the United States since the last Gulf War. Indeed, since then, no country has been in a better position to evaluate and control Iraq's business.

Saddam Hussein smuggled $6 billion worth of oil out of Iraq, according to the General Accounting Office, much of it via tanker in the Persian Gulf. But the U.N. Multinational Interception Force (MIF)—charged with interdicting smuggling—turns out not to be a U.N. operation at all. The MIF came about when the Security Council passed a resolution in 1991 inviting any U.N. member country to interdict Iraqi oil smuggling in the Gulf, if the occasion arose. The result was the creation of a loose-knit collection of ships from various nations—all under the command of a United States officer from the Fifth Fleet. The commanders of the "U.N." interception force have consisted entirely of a series of United States rear admirals or vice-admirals. And the ships taking part were almost all U.S. Navy vessels. Although twenty or so other countries participated, their contributions were minuscule compared with the U.S. role. In 2001, for example, Denmark contributed one ship for three months; U.S. participation that year involved ninety ships. In 2002, Poland contributed one ship for four months; U.S. participation involved ninety-nine ships. A few Arab countries participated in other ways. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait agreed to handle and dispose of ships that had been seized by the MIF. Britain's role was a bit larger than most other countries'; Britons always served as deputy commanders. But even Britain's role was dwarfed by that of the United States. In 2001 four British ships were involved, compared to the United States' ninety.



The interception force was by all accounts quite active. It boarded hundreds of ships each year through 2001. [illegible] during the Bush Administration's lead up to the war, the MIF boarded over 3,000 ships, then did the same in 2003. The U.S. commander made annual reports to the 661 Committee. But that was the only involvement with the U.N., and the only U.N. body involved—not the secretary general, not "the U.N. bureaucracy," just a committee of the fifteen nations that sat on the Security Council. If Hussein did indeed smuggle $6 billion worth of oil in "the richest rip-off in world history," he didn't do it with the complicity of the U.N. He did it on the watch of the U.S. Navy.

While the Fifth Fleet intercepted ships carrying illicit Iraqi oil, the U.S. position on overland oil smuggling to Jordan and Turkey was somewhat different: outright approval. In May 1991, under the first Bush Administration, as Iraq's neighbors began to complain about the effects of the sanctions on their countries, the United States quietly decided to grant an informal "exemption" to Jordan, permitting it to import Iraqi oil in clear violation of the sanctions. This convenient arrangement continued for the next decade, with the blessing of three U.S. administrations. According to the Duelfer report, Iraq's income from these arrangements with Jordan totaled some $4.4 billion. Turkey, like Jordan, complained that the sanctions were harming its economy. And Turkey, like Jordan, was a crucial ally the United States needed to appease. The result was a decision by the United States "to close our eyes to leakage via Turkey," according to former Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau. By 1997 the volume of oil being smuggled from Iraq to Turkey had grown to 1,000 trucks per day, transporting millions of tons of oil per year . . . all while U.S. planes enforcing no-fly zones flew overhead. Iraq's illicit income from Turkey, according to the Duelfer report, came to $710 million.

*So called because of Security Council Resolution 661, which established the Iraq sanctions regime in 1990.*

About $1.5 billion of Hussein's ill-gotten gains, according to the Duelfer report, came from ickbacks. The Iraqi regime is said to ave worked out deals with manufacurers to buy goods at inflated rices—5 percent or 10 percent bove market price—the seller then eturning the difference under the able. It may well be that there were ystematic kickbacks. But if there ere, they didn't happen for lack of versight on the part of the U.N. he Oil for Food Programme had ne of the most rigorous, elaborate ystems of monitoring and verificaion imaginable. It was designed by ne Security Council and implemented by the Secretariat. Before Iraq ould purchase a single item—ncluding food or medicine—it had o submit a detailed proposal for each x-month period, showing where the reas of greatest need were and how nese purchases would address those eeds. Each proposal was accompaied by a list, several hundred pages n length, of every single item and ne quantity Iraq wanted to purchase, or every category that was in the roposal. U.N. staff then looked over he list, based on input from UNICEF and other U.N. agencies, to nsure that the list corresponded to ne correct humanitarian priorities. Only then could Iraq sign a contract ith a vendor to buy the approved oods. Once the contract was signed, was circulated to the Office of Iraq rogramme (OIP),* as well as UNCOM (later UNMOVIC),** and ne entire 661 Committee. Once the ontract was approved, and the goods ere shipped to Iraq, an independent nspection agent (first Lloyd's Regiser and later Cotecna) inspected nem on arrival. The Iraqi governnent then transported them to their estinations. If there were security oncerns, the U.N. provided additional monitoring. Chlorine, for example, was essential to water purification, but it also could be used to produce chemical weapons. So UNICEF provided monitors who tracked every single chlorine canister from contracting through arrival in Iraq, including transport to its destination, installation in an approved facility, and then disposal of the empty canister. U.N. staff in Iraq also provided monitoring of the Oil for Food Programme as a whole, looking at equity, efficiency, and adequacy. Staff from UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, the U.N. Development Programme, and other agencies conducted thousands of site visits to confirm that food was arriving in the villages where it was needed, that medical supplies were arriving at the clinics, and that school supplies, potable water, and agricultural supplies were being distributed properly.

This process gave every member of the Security Council the opportunity to review nearly every contract for Iraqi imports; and every member had the right to question any contract, to delay it, and to veto it. When the U.N. staff found that a price was suspiciously high, they asked the company for an explanation. If the explanation wasn't satisfactory, they notified the 661 Committee, giving every member the opportunity to block or delay contracts to prevent kickbacks. On more than seventy occasions, the OIP told the committee it was concerned that a price was so high it might allow for kickbacks, and gave the committee all the documentation. In not a single instance did the United States choose to block any transaction due to suspected kickbacks.

It was not because the United States lacked information. Of the fifteen members on the committee, the United States took the job of examining and assessing Iraq's dealings the most seriously, drawing on sixty technical experts to scrutinize contracts. The United States held up contracts for months, sometimes for years, asking questions again and again about the exact chemical makeup of medical-laboratory supplies, or how much weight a truck could carry, or whether or not a computer used a Pentium chip. Concerned about security, the United States blocked yogurt makers, child vaccines, ambulances, equipment for water purification, truck tires, electrical generators. . . In July 2002 alone, $5 billion of contracts for critical humanitarian supplies for Iraq were on hold—nearly all at the behest of the United States.

In examining contracts, "the U.S. and Britain were by far the most vigilant," testified John Ruggie, a professor at Harvard University, at the Senate hearings on the accusations against the U.N. this year. Among the tens of thousands of contracts reviewed, "not one—not a single solitary one—was ever held up by any member on the grounds of pricing." According to Ruggie, the United States and Britain "overlooked pricing irregularities in order to keep the sanctions regime in place and to put all their efforts into preventing dangerous technologies from getting into Saddam's hands."

How Iraq sold its oil was also under scrutiny, and the United States did act on what it perceived to be skimming by Hussein in these deals. The solution it enacted, however, succeeded in almost bankrupting the entire Oil for Food Programme within months.

In December 2000 the "oil overseers"—oil specialists appointed by the secretary general to monitor Iraq's oil sales—reported to the 661 Committee that Iraq was setting its prices unusually low, and that this left room for cash payments under the table. Since the terms of the Oil for Food Programme required every single sale of Iraqi oil to be approved by every member of the Security Council, the United States and Britain came up with a novel solution. Instead of approving prices at the beginning of each sales period (usually a month), in accordance with normal commercial practices, the two allies would simply with-

*The OIP ran the Oil for Food Programme.*

*** The U.N. Special Commission on Monitoring, replaced in 1999 by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, was mandated to disarm Iraq of its WMDs and to monitor any further developments or acquisitions.*

hold their approval until after the oil was sold—creating a bizarre scenario in which buyers had to sign contracts without knowing what the price would be. The rationale was that this allowed the members of the 661 Committee to then set the price at the fair market value—as they determined it to be, weeks later. The oil overseers told the committee that this might stop the kickbacks but that it would be absolutely disastrous for the funding of the humanitarian goods. They offered a variety of other solutions, but the United States and Britain insisted on this one. And the results were in fact disastrous. Oil sales collapsed by 40 percent, and along with them the funds for critical humanitarian imports. On February 26, 2002, the director of the Oil for Food Programme informed the Security Council that $7 billion in urgent humanitarian contracts could not be paid for, because of the shortfall from the new pricing policies. The Oil for Food Programme, the lifeline for the entire Iraqi population, was badly compromised—not because Saddam Hussein had skimmed 5 percent or 10 percent but because the United States and Britain had adopted a punitive measure so extreme that it nearly bankrupted the entire program.

In the end, there may well have been smuggling, and there may well have been skimming at the margins of the Oil for Food Programme. But these did not occur for lack of oversight. The program's elaborate structure of monitoring was simply unprecedented within the history of international governance. Every purchase was scrutinized for possible military uses. Every purchase was reviewed to ensure that it conformed to humanitarian priorities. Nine different U.N. humanitarian agencies were involved, as well as arms inspectors, as well as the Secretariat, as well as the entire Security Council. Every sale of oil, and every purchase of oil equipment and spare parts, was reviewed by the U.N.'s oil overseers, as well as every member of the Security Council. Hundreds of U.N. staff in Iraq monitored the arrival and distribution of goods, and were thoroughly involved in m[illegible] aspect of [illegible] services. [illegible] terms of [illegible] Programme, the secretary general provided [illegible] reports to the Security Council every ninety days, for seven years. If the Iraqi government managed to misuse funds, it happened not because there was a lack of oversight but despite the most elaborate structure of oversight imaginable.

Saddam Hussein may well have ended up with more money in his pockets than he should have. Perhaps it was even in the billions. But little of the blame can credibly be laid at the feet of "the U.N. bureaucracy." Far more of the fault lies with policies and decisions of the Security Council in which the United States played a central role. It is particularly ironic to hear the United States speak of the U.N. as a global center of corruption and incompetence. We might want to remember one occasion in particular when the U.N. exercised its responsibility for careful oversight. It was January of 2003, when Colin Powell insisted that Iraq was rife with weapons of mass destruction ready to be unleashed against Iraq's neighbors, and against the United States. The Security Council would not authorize an invasion of Iraq. The members of the council wanted evidence, not speculation; and there wasn't any, because there weren't any weapons of mass destruction after all. Perhaps it is unsurprising that today the only role it seems the United States expects the U.N. to play in the continuing drama of Iraq is that of scapegoat. ■

# BURIED TRUTHS

## *Debunking the nuclear "bunker buster"*

## *By Benjamin Phelan*

According to Defense Department estimates, there are perhaps 10,000 underground military installations in the world. Most, no doubt, are crude ammo dumps, but some are literally subterranean fortresses. The most dazzling is the complex beneath Russia's Yamantau Mountain, begun under Brezhnev but completed only recently; tunneled sideways into the Urals southeast of Moscow, the complex sits below thousands of feet of quartz, insulated from an American ICBM attack. China, too, has an extensive system of underground bunkers and command shelters, including hundreds of fortified missile silos, complete with living quarters, that are scattered throughout its 3.7 million square miles. In North Korea the reliance on tunnels and bunkers [illegible]

*Benjamin Phelan* [illegible] New York City.

aggressive. Underground weapons factories there are believed to employ as many as 20,000 workers; the nation has tunneled under the DMZ and into South Korea, has dug in upward of 10,000 pieces of artillery along the border, and even has built underground airstrips. Iran possesses an underground uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz that can be expanded or altered in secrecy. Libya's vast chemical-weapons plant at Tarhunah, though now apparently in disuse, is still standing, still underground, and could be quietly reopened by a lapsed Qaddafi. Without satellite surveillance showing its construction and burial, the world might still be ignorant of Syria's As-Safirah chemical-weapons factory. These installations, and countless others unknown around the world, constitute the last class of targets that America's current arsenal cannot credibly threaten with swift annihilation.

Since the Cold War, the U.S de-
ense community has become obsessed
ith the problem of bunkers and how
o destroy them. The solution put for-
ard has, of course, been expensive
ew weaponry. Soon after the attacks
f September 11, 2001, the Bush Ad-
inistration made a push for new nu-
ear programs, the most conspicuous of
hich was the Robust Nuclear Earth
enetrator (RNEP), designed to de-
roy deeply buried bunkers. During
he first presidential debate this fall,
ohn Kerry made much of his opposi-
on to the program. "Right now
he President is
pending hun-
reds of millions
f dollars to re-
earch bunker-
usting nuclear
eapons," he said.
We're telling
ther people, 'You
an't have nuclear
eapons,' but
e're pursuing
new nuclear
eapon that we
ight even con-
emplate using.
ot this presi-
ent. I'm going to
ut that program
own, and we're
oing to make it
ear to the world we're serious about
ontaining nuclear proliferation."

But Kerry's gesture, while well in-
ntioned, was largely empty. The
nited States already has a nuclear
unker-buster, the B61-11, which was
sted during the first Bush Adminis-
ation and deployed in 1997 under
ill Clinton. In the eyes of potential ad-
ersaries, the B61-11 is inherently a
eapon that, in Kerry's phrase, "we
ight even contemplate using": alone
our vast nuclear arsenal, the B61-11
tailored not to deter a full-on attack
a large nuclear competitor but to
reemptively strike a smaller state. If,
Kerry rightly argues, the RNEP is a
rovocation to non-nuclear states in
heir efforts to acquire weapons of mass
estruction, it is hardly more so than
he bunker buster we already possess.



Were the effectiveness of bunker busters to be demonstrated, the weapons might conceivably be worth the risk and expense. But in fact, even a cursory consideration of the science shows that bunker-busting nuclear weapons are a wasteful and dangerous delusion.

A bunker-busting weapon is one that will, in principle, penetrate its target and explode only afterward. This is accomplished, again in principle, with fuses that delay detonation until a predetermined point after impact. All current bunker busters, including the nuclear B61-11 and the conventional GBU-37, are "gravity bombs," meaning that they have no propulsion system. They rely instead on the natural acceleration of gravity, as well as on their javelin-like construction: the B61-11, for example, is roughly twelve feet in length but only thirteen inches in diameter, and is capped with a pointed nosecone. Such a design is supposed to allow bunker busters to destroy targets several hundred feet down.

In real-world conditions, though, it has been difficult to make the weapons perform as advertised. Dropped from moving airplanes, gravity bombs often strike the earth at a considerable angle, which increases the tendency of their trajectory, while underground, to bend back up toward the surface. If the angle of attack is particularly shallow, a penetrator will actually come back up out of the ground, skipping along the battlefield. And even when they do strike at a useful angle, they cannot be made to penetrate deeply enough to destroy any but the shallowest of bunkers. The Defense Department's Nuclear Posture Review for 2001 laments that the B61-11 "cannot survive penetration into many types of terrain in which hardened underground facilities are located." This is a generous analysis: the "terrain" referred to is the hard rock under which valuable targets are almost always buried. When dropped from a height of 40,000 feet, the B61-11 was able to penetrate three meters at most into the Alaskan tundra, and not at all into hard rock (that is, without self-destructing).

The inadequacy of the B61-11 is due not to a particularly poor construction but rather to the basic limitations of bomb-making steel. In the test drops performed in Alaska, the B61-11 reached roughly 300 meters per second at impact. In order to penetrate reinforced concrete, it would need to be traveling at approximately 500 meters per second. At around 900 meters per second, the shock wave generated by the missile's slamming into the ground will deform it severely; at 1,200 meters per second, the missile will in most cases break into pieces. To penetrate granite—ubiquitous in mountainous bunkers, and believed to be common above any truly valuable bunker—a penetrator would have to attain upward of 3,000 meters per second, at which speed it would certainly be crushed. Robert Nelson of Princeton University has demonstrated that because of the limitations imposed by the yield strength of the steel used in casings, no bunker buster can ever go fast enough to penetrate reinforced concrete deeper than five times its length without destroying itself in the process; and even this number is too high for any real-world scenario. What is more, the length of the bomb cannot be increased much, for two reasons: there are no aircraft capable of carrying a weapon much longer than the ones that are currently deployed; and as length increases, so does the tendency of the bomb to snap in two on impact.

Raymond Jeanloz, a member of the National Academy of Sciences committee advising Congress on earth penetrators, expresses frustration at the defense community's obliviousness to existing research. "A lot of the infor-

mation is already in house," Jeanloz said in an interview. "Why don't [they] come back to Congress with a really good plan that has a good chance of working, rather than asking for a bunch of money where it's not even clear [they've] reviewed the information [they] already have?" The answer lies, no doubt, in the seductiveness of the bunker-buster idea, whereby a bomb, after being dropped from the safety of 40,000 feet, eliminates in a clean, swift, and invisible blast the most intractable problem facing the U.S. military. This seems to be a fantasy too powerful to abandon.

The most stubborn part of the fantasy is that a "low-yield" bunker buster could be employed as a "clean" nuclear weapon, whose explosion and fallout would be contained underground. This aspiration is most explicitly laid out in a report from the Defense Department Science Board entitled "Future Strategic Strike Forces," which imagines that "[p]enetration [by a nuclear bunker-buster] to a depth of 50 to 55 meters would enable disablement of 100-meter-deep underground facilities by contained 400-ton explosions." Let us, for the moment, forget the fact that 50 meters is more than twice the depth it is physically possible for any penetrator, real or idealized, to burrow into rock. According to the government's own guidelines, drawn up during the decades in which it tested nuclear weapons under the Nevada desert, a 400-ton explosion would have to occur a full 600 meters underground in order to be "contained." These guidelines also stipulate a carefully sealed burial shaft to contain the blast, not a maw. Even the B61-11, at its current, inadequate impact speeds, does not burrow a clean rabbit-hole in the ground but rather kicks up a crater like a meteorite; any faster-moving penetrator would do so to a still greater degree.

Even supposing that the missile's point of entry were miraculously neat, a nuclear blast at the depths a real missile could attain would invariably breach the surface of the earth, expelling a hot fallout cloud in what is known as a "base surge." Base surges are more dangerous than tradi-

[illegible] spread more quickly, sweeping across the surface of the earth in every direction, outward rather than upward. Bunkers are usually built in urban areas, so many thousands of deaths would be a virtual certainty. Even a 1-kiloton bunker buster—a relative firecracker, with a tiny fraction of the explosive power of the high-yield RNEP—detonated at fifty feet underground could eject about 1,000,000 cubic meters of radioactive soil.

Finally, it is entirely unclear whether even such a catastrophic blast would, as the Science Board claims, "enable disablement" of an installation. A well-designed granite bunker could withstand four times the shock produced by such an explosion. If the bunker housed weapons of mass destruction, studies have shown that a canister of, say, mustard gas could be insulated from the heat of the blast by a few meters of earth, and thereby escape being vaporized. Cushioning the canister from the shock wave is more difficult, and in the likely event that a canister is ruptured but not destroyed, the chemical agent would escape the shattered container into the earth; a split second later it would be blasted up into the air, carried away in the fallout cloud.

During the Cold War, it eventually became clear that the war nuclear weapons were built to fight could never be joined. Yet the United States and the Soviet Union kept adding more weapons to their arsenals, long after the absolute destruction of each was at the fingertips of the other. The mechanics of Mutual Assured Destruction guaranteed that if either side launched a nuclear attack, both sides would be destroyed, and the world as well. From their former role as war-fighting weapons, nuclear weapons were reconceived as having the sole purpose of preventing their own use, [illegible] nuclear stockpile could be justified by the word "deterrence." It was a tortured, grim logic, but practical.

[illegible] ment's public justification for building [illegible] nuclear weapons, but the term has undergone semantic drift. What today is passed off as deterrence by proponents of low-yield bunker busters and the RNEP is not, as it once was, the demonstrable ability of nuclear weapons to prevent nuclear war but the unproven power of unworkable weapons to bully other countries into abjuring any action at all deemed offensive by the United States.

Even supporters of the new projects concede that nuclear weapons don't seem to work as well in the new deterrence as they did in the old. "Sometimes they just don't deter, do they?" Joseph Howard, a nuclear scientist at Los Alamos and an early and influential voice in favor of low-yield nuclear weapons, told me recently. "We're in the new world order, and I think a very low-yield penetrator offers us some versatility. On the other hand, I don't know what to do against some of these other diaperheads. . . . The problem is that, whatever the rogue nation is, whoever the rogue leader is, it seems like it could be very, very tough to deter them with any type of rational means we deterred with during the Cold War."

The technology of bunker busters may yet be improved, but only slightly; and what advances can be made against the hard limits of earth penetration are not enough to warrant the hundreds of millions of dollars needed to realize them. Even if earth penetrators could be made to perform at their theoretical limit, the only gain would be a temporary advantage over countries that have not yet dug bunkers at a depth that no weapon, no matter how massive, could ever reach. As soon as that comparatively easy engineering feat is completed, the nuclear weapon that spurred it on will have brought about its own obsolescence. If we are developing nuclear weapons that our government says we might use, there is no incentive for smaller countries not to go after their own weapons as quickly and quietly as possible—down in the very bunkers we are unable to destroy. ■

# SPEAK, HOYT-SCHERMERHORN

## Doom and romance on a subway platform

*By Jonathan Lethem*

When you're a child, everything local is famous. On that principle, Hoyt-Schermerhorn was the most famous subway station in the world. It was the first subway station I knew, and it took years for me to disentangle my primal fascination with its status as a functional ruin, an indifferent home to clockwork chaos, from the fact that it was, in objective measure, an anomalous place. Personal impressions and neighborhood lore swirled in my exaggerated regard. In fact the place was cool and weird beyond my obsession's parameters, cooler and weirder than most subway stations anyway.





My Brooklyn neighborhood, as I knew it in the 1970s, was an awkwardly gentrifying residential zone. The Hoyt-Schermerhorn station stood at the border of the vibrant mercantile disarray of Fulton Street—once the borough's poshest shopping and theater boulevard. Fulton had suffered a steep decline, from Manhattanesque grandeur to ghetto pedestrian mall, through the Fifties and Sixties. Now, no less vital in its way, the place was full of chain outlets and sidewalk vendors, many selling African licorice-root chews and "Muslim" incense alongside discount socks and hats and mittens. The station itself gave testimony to the lost commercial greatness of the area. Like some Manhattan subway stops, though fewer and fewer every year, it licensed businesses on its mezzanine level: a magazine shop, a shoeshine stand, a bakery. Most telling and shrouded at once were the ruined shop-display windows that lined the long corridor from the Bond Street entrance. Elegant blue-and-yellow tilework labeled them with an enormous *L*—standing for what exactly? The ruined dressmakers' dummies and empty display stands behind the cracked glass weren't saying.

The station was synonymous with crime. A neighborhood legend held that Hoyt-Schermerhorn consistently ranked highest in arrests in the whole transit system. Its two border streets, Hoyt and Bond, were vents from the Fulton mall area, where purse snatchers and street dealers were likely to flee and be cornered. The station also housed one of the borough's four Transit Police substations, a headquarters for subway cops that legislated over a quarter of Brooklyn's subway system, so perhaps it was merely that suspects nabbed elsewhere in the system were brought there to register their actual arrest? I've never been able to corroborate the legend. The presence of

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Illustration by Andrea Ventura

cops and robbers in the same place has a kind of chicken-and-egg quality. Or should it be considered as a Heisenbergian "observer" problem—do we arrest you because we see you? Would we arrest you as much elsewhere if we were there?

However ridiculous it may seem, it is true that within sight of that police substation my father, his arms laden with luggage for a flight out of JFK, had his pocket picked while waiting on line for a token. And the pay phone in the station was widely understood to have drug-dealers-only status. Maybe it does still. I myself was detained, not arrested, trying to breeze the wrong way through an exit gate, flashing an imaginary bus pass at the token agent, on my way to high school. A cop gave me a ticket and turned me around to go home and get money for a token. I tried to engage my cop in sophistry—how could I be ticketed for a crime that had been prevented? Shouldn't he let me through to ride the train if I were paying the price for my misdeed? No cigar.

Undercover transit policemen are trained to watch for "loopers"—that is, riders who switch from one train car to the next at each stop. Loopers are understood to be likely pickpockets, worthy of suspicion. Even before that, though, loopers are guilty of using the subway *wrong*. In truth, every subway rider is an undercover officer in a precinct house of the mind, noticing and cataloguing outré and dissident behavior in his fellow passengers even while cultivating the apparent indifference for which New Yorkers are famous, above and below ground. It may only be safe to play at not noticing others because our noticing senses are sharpened to trigger-readiness. Jittery subway-shooter Bernhard Goetz once ran for mayor. He may not have been electable, but he had a constituency.

As it happens, I'm also an inveterate looper, though I do it less these days. I'll still sometimes loop to place myself at the right exit stairwell, to save steps if I'm running late. I've looped on the 7 out to Shea Stadium, searching for a friend headed for the same ball game. More than anything, though, I looped as a

[illegible] this form of footpad [illegible] ranean habits I learned as a terrified child. I [illegible] I'll stand at one spot until a train stops, then abruptly veer left- or rightward, to enter a car other than the one for which I might have appeared to be waiting. This to shake pursuers, of course. Similarly, a nighttime trick of exiting at lonely subway stations: at arrival I'll stay in my seat until the doors have lain open for a few seconds, then dash from the train. In these tricks my teenager self learned to cash in a small portion of the invisibility that is not only each subway rider's presumed right but his duty to other passengers, whose irritation and panic rises at each sign of oddness, in exchange for tiny likelihoods of increased safety.

Other peculiarities helped Hoyt-Schermerhorn colonize my dreams. The station featured not only the lively express A train, and its pokey but serviceable local equivalent, the CC, but also the erratic and desultory GG, a train running a lonely trail through Bedford-Stuyvesant and into Queens. The GG [illegible] shortened today to the G [illegible] had the sorry distinction of being the only subway line in the entire system never to penetrate Manhattan. All roads lead to Rome, but not the GG. Hoyt-Schermerhorn also hosted a quickly abandoned Eighties transit experiment, the Train to the Plane—basically an A train that, for an additional fare, made a quick express run to the airport. For my friends and me, the Train to the Plane was richly comical on several grounds—first of all, because it didn't actually go to the airport: you had to take a bus from the end of the line. Second, for its twee and hectoring local-television ad—"*Take the train to the plane, take the train to the plane*," etc. And last because one sight of it, rumbling nearly empty into Hoyt-Schermerhorn with the emblem of an airplane in place of its destination-identifying number or letter, suggested an inglorious subway train that was fantasizing itself some other, less earthbound conveyance.

The Train to the Plane [illegible]

[illegible] the youngest cousin to a more successful freak train, also run out of Hoyt-Schermerhorn: the Aqueduct Race[illegible] track special, which ran horse-racing [illegible] to the track on gambling afternoons. Begun in 1959, it flourished [illegible] is wagering's infrastructure tends to [illegible] until in 1981 it became a casualty [illegible] the even more efficient Off-Track Betting, known as OTB, the walk-in storefront gambling establishments that soon dotted the city. Both the Train to the Plane and the Aqueduct Race[illegible] track special made use of Hoyt-Schermerhorn's most fundamentally strange feature: its two quiescent tracks and dark spare platform, that parallel ghost haunting the live platforms. As a kid, I took that dark platform for granted. Later, I'd learn how rare it was—though there are whole ghost stations, dead to trains, and famously host to homeless populations and vast graffiti masterpieces, only a handful of active stations in the entire system have a ghost platform.

Even if I'd known it, I wasn't then curious enough to consider how those two unused tracks and that whole spare platform spoke, as did the ruined display windows, of the zone's dwindled splendor, its former place as a hub, a center. Where I lived was self-evidently marginal to Manhattan—who cared that it was once something grander? What got me excited about Hoyt-Schermerhorn's eerie fourth platform was this: one summer day in 1979, I found a film crew working there, swirling in and out of the station from rows of trucks parked along vacant Schermerhorn Street. Actors costumed as both gang members and as high school students dressed for prom night worked in a stilled train. The movie, I learned from an assistant director standing bored with a walkie-talkie at one of the subway entrances, was called *The Warriors*. My invisible, squalid home turf had been redeemed as picturesque. New Yorkers mostly take film crews for granted as an irritant part of the self-congratulatory burden of living in the World Capital. But I was more like a small-town hick in my delight at Hoyt-Schermerhorn's being deemed lensworthy. I was only afraid that, like a vampire or a ghost, the station wouldn't actually be able to be cap-

red in depiction: what were the odds his crappy-looking movie with no stars ould ever be released? By picking my turf, the crew had likely sealed their doom.

The origins of the New York underground rapid transit, like those of the ty itself, reflect a bastard convergence utopian longing and squalid practiality—land grabs, sweetheart deals, ned pockets. The city's first, thwarted subway was no different: a Jules erne dream, one instantly snuffed by ammany Hall, that paradigmatic pocical machine. The story has the beau- of a Greek myth: a short length of neumatic subway built in 1870 *in secret* beneath Broadway by a gentleman ngineer determined to alleviate the noking daylight nightmare of New ork's foot, pig, horse, stagecoach, and rface railway traffic, against the staus quo wishes of Tammany's Boss weed, who as commissioner of public orks rolled in troughs of money exorted from trolley and omnibus comanies. The tube's builder, Alfred Ely each, ought to be the hero of one of nose elegiac novels of Time Travelers n Olde New York—one of the first ditors of *Scientific American*, architect f American patent law, he was also a ealth nut and an opera buff, and the an in whose office Edison first demonrated the phonograph ("Good morng. . . . How do you like the talking ox?"). In fifty-eight nights of covert igging, Beach's crew created a 312-oot tunnel, then assembled an elegant ooden, horseshoe-shaped subway car, ushed by an enormous electric fan. When he unveiled his miracle to the ress—in an underground waiting room itted with curtains, frescoed walls, tuffed chairs, a grandfather clock, a ountain, and bright zircon lamps—his lemonstration subway made a sensaion, drawing four hundred thousand isitors in 1870. Boss Tweed, aghast at vhat had been hatched beneath his eet, roused a legal and entrepreneurial ssault against Beach's tunnel, investng his influence—and New York City's mmediate future—in elevated lines ather than subways. The life was grad ually squeezed out of Beach's dream. His tunnel was rented for wine storage, then sealed, then forgotten. When n 1912 diggers excavating for what would become the BMT line stumbled unwittingly into Beach's intact waiting room, his drained fountain and extinguished lamps, his stilled wooden car, they must have felt like intruders on Tut's tomb.

I became a regular customer in 1978. That year I began commuting from Brooklyn to Harlem, an hour away in the upper reaches of Manhattan, to attend Music and Art, a venerated public high school created by Fiorello La Guardia. (Music and Art, with its sister campus, Performing Arts, was immortalized in the movie *Fame* during my years there, but since I was studying painting and no painters were portrayed in the film, I didn't take it personally.) The A train out of Hoyt-Schermerhorn was now my twice-daily passage, to and from. My companion was Lynn Nottage, a kid from the block I grew up on, a street friend. Lynn was from a black middle-class family; I was from a white bohemian one. We had never gone to school together in Brooklyn—Lynn had been at private school—but now were high school freshmen together, in distant Harlem. Lynn had the challenge of getting to school on time with me as her albatross. Some mornings the sound of her ringing the doorbell was my alarm clock.

Lynn and I had habits. We stood in a certain spot on the platform, boarding the same train every morning (despite an appearance of chaos, the system is regular). Most mornings we rode the same subway car, the conductor's car. Had we been advised to do this by protective parents? I don't know. Anyhow, we became spies, on the adults, the office workers, tourists, beggars, and policemen who'd share segments of our endless trip. We took a special delight in watching the bewilderment of riders trapped after Fifty-ninth Street, thinking they'd boarded a local, faces sagging in defeat as the train skipped every station up to 125th, the longest express hop in the system. Also, we spied on our own conductor. The conductor's wife rode in with him to work—she'd been aboard since somewhere before Hoyt-Schermerhorn—then kissed him goodbye at a stop in the financial district. Two stops later, his girlfriend boarded the train. They'd kiss and moon between stops until she reached her destination. Lynn and I took special pleasure in witnessing this openly, staring like evil Walter Keane kids so the conductor felt the knife edge of our complicity.

This was the year another student, a talented violinist, had been pushed from a train platform, her arm severed and reattached. The incident unnerved us to the extent that we were able to afford to maintain it as conscious knowledge: we couldn't, and so didn't. There were paltry but somehow effective brackets of irony around our sense of the city's dangers. Lynn and I were soon joined by Jeremy and Adam, other kids from my street, and we all four persistently found crime and chaos amusing. The same incidents that drew hand-wringing from our parents and righteous indignation from the tabloids struck us as merry evidence of the fatuousness of grown-ups. Naturally the world sucked, naturally the authorities blinked. Anything was possible. Graffiti was maybe an art form, certainly a definitive statement as to who had actually grasped the nature of reality as well as the workings of the reeling system around you: not adults but the kids just a year or three older than you, who were scary but legendary. The entire city was like the school in the Ramones' movie *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, or the college in *Animal House*—the dean corrupt and blind, the campus an unpatrolled playground. Our own fear, paradoxically, was more evidence, like the graffiti and the conductor's affair, of the reckless, wide-open nature of this world. It may have appeared from the outside that Lynn and Jeremy and Adam and I were cowering in this lawless place, but in our minds we romped.

The names of the three limbs of the subway—the IRT (Interborough Rapid Transit), the BMT (Brooklyn Manhattan Transit, changed from the original BRT, for Brooklyn Rapid Transit), and the IND (Independent)—are slowly falling from New Yorkers' common tongue, and the last enamel signs citing the old

names will soon be pried off. Slipping into shadow with the disuse of those names is the tripartite origin of the subways, the fact that each of the three sets of trains was once a completely separate and rival corporation. The lines tried to squeeze one another out of business, even as they vied with now-extinct rival forms: streetcars and elevated trains. On this subject, the language of the now-unified citywide system, the official maps and names, has grown mute. But the grammar of the train lines and stations themselves, with their overlaps and redundancies, their strange omissions and improvised passageways, still pronounces this history everywhere.

The early subways pioneered in crafty partnership with realtors and developers. Groping for new ridership, the early owners threw track deep into farmland, anticipating (and creating) neighborhoods like Bensonhurst and Jackson Heights. The latecomer, the IND(ependent), contrary to its name, was a political instrument, conceived from within a mayor's feud with transit's maverick owners. James Hylan, elected mayor in 1917, was widely understood to be a puppet of the Hearst newspapers—a man who, according to Robert Moses, "swelled instead of growing" in office. His credo—"the preservation of democracy and the retention of the 5-cent fare"—is only a glimpse into the scope of his obsession with transit interests, whom he accused of wishing to rape New York "like the conquered cities of old."

The legacy of Hylan's bullying was the eventual merging of this chaotic system into a confederated public trust. When subway unification came, in 1940 under Fiorello La Guardia, it was the largest railway merger in the history of the country—of, I suppose, the world. Under Hylan's own watch, though, the IND was a city-sponsored rival to the private interests, one nonetheless forced to run in the black and therefore to cling to established population centers, unlike its more adventurous precursors. The IND's circumscription within the city's previously established transit routes alienated the realtor lobby, previously the subway's great secret weapon. The city's destiny was no longer horizontal but vertical, perhaps fractal [illegible] with the American [illegible] of something [illegible] and strange.

Construction of new subway stations and tunnels in a city already webbed with infrastructure was a routine marvel. According to Stan Fischler's *Uptown, Downtown*, tunneling for the IND required, among other astonishing statistics (22 million cubic yards of rock and earth displaced, 7 million man-days of labor) the *relocation* of 26 miles of water and gas pipes, 350 miles of electrical wire, and 18 miles of sewage pipes. What's striking, though, in photographs documenting that work, is the blithe disinterest in the faces of passersby, even at such preposterous scenes as workers tunneling beneath a street where both a surface trolley and an elevated train are being kept in continuous operation above. Construction of the Sixth Avenue tunnel at Thirty-fourth Street was an engineering marvel of its day, the tunnel having to be threaded under the Broadway BMT subway and over the Pennsylvania Railroad (now Amtrak) tubes, as well as an even more deeply buried water main. This, according to Groff Conklin, author of *All About Subways*, "the most difficult piece of subway construction which has ever been attempted," is almost impossible to keep in mind on an F train as it slides blandly through Herald Square today.

A scattering of photos of the Hoyt-Schermerhorn dig are available in the archives in the basement of the MTA's building on Livingston Street, just a couple of blocks from the station. The excavation method was typical: it was a "cut-and-cover" job, where an elaborate temporary roadway is constructed of wood and girders. The majority of the pictures document a not-quite-catastrophe: the collapse after a rainstorm of a portion of the wooden roadway into the tunnel, swallowing several cars and streetlamps but no lives. In several photos the landmark Quaker Meetinghouse is seen hovering on the crumbled brink of the hole. Another few feet and it would be undermined. The only newspaper account I could locate treated the collapse so glancingly [illegible]

[illegible] only for an admiring photographer [illegible] picking a car from the pit, labeled with a brief caption.

Vitaly Komar, in *A Walker in the City*, wrote: "All those first stations in Brooklyn—Clark, Borough Hall, Hoyt, Nevins, the junction of the East and West side express lines—told me only that I was on the last leg home, though there was always a stirring of my heart at Hoyt, when the grimy subway platform was suddenly enlivened by Abraham and Straus's windows of ladies' wear . . . When a friend directed me to this passage, thinking he'd solved the mystery of those deserted shopwindows in the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station, I at least had a clue. I searched the corporate history of Abraham & Straus—Brooklyn's dominant department store and a polestar in my childhood constellation of the borough's tarnished majesty, with its brass fixtures and uniformed elevator operators, and the eighth floor's mysterious stamp- and coin-collector's counters. In the A&S annals I found the name of a Fulton Street rival, Frederick Loeser's, one of the nation's largest department stores for almost a century, eventually gobbled by A&S in a merger. The 1950s were to such stores as the Mesozoic was to the dinosaurs—between '52 and '57 New York lost Loeser's, Namm's, Wanamaker's, McCreery's and Hearn's; the names alone are concrete poetry.

I'd nailed my tile-work *L*: Loeser's created display windows in the new Hoyt-Schermerhorn station to vie with A&S's famous (at least to Alfred Kazin) windows at Hoyt. Kazin's windows are visible as bricked-in tile window frames today, but like the smashed and dusty Loeser's windows of my childhood, they go ignored. Meanwhile, aboveground on Fulton Street, the name Loeser's has recently reemerged like an Etch A Sketch filigree on some second-story brickwork, as lost urban names sometimes do.

The abandoned platform was a mystery shallower to penetrate than Loeser's *L*—in fact, it is the station's bragging point. The extra track connects the abandoned platform to an

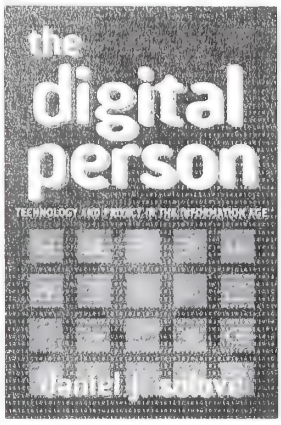
bandoned station, three blocks away
n Court Street. This spur of misguided
evelopment was put out of its misery
1946, and sat unused until some-
me in the early Sixties, when the
TA realized it at last had an ideal fa-
lity for renting to film and television
ews. The empty Court Street station
nd the curve of track between it
nd the ghost platform at Hoyt-
chermerhorn allowed filmmakers to
n trains in and out of two picturesque
ations along a nice curved wall, with-
ut disturbing regular operations. For
his distinction Hoyt-Schermerhorn
oradically stars in human-interest
ories in the *New York Times* Metro
ection: who doesn't enjoy reading
bout film stars slumming in urban lo-
ations? The nonpareil among thirty-
x movies made utilizing subway prop-
ty just between 1970 and 1975 is the
ubway-hijacking-hostage thriller *The
aking of Pelham One Two Three*. It
as in Hoyt-Schermerhorn's approach
unnels that Robert Shaw and his co-
ort stripped off fake mustaches and
rench coats and, clutching bags of
ansom money, made their hopeless
ash for daylight, and it was in Hoyt-
chermerhorn's approach tunnels that
haw, cornered by crusading MTA in-
pector Walter Matthau, stepped on
he third rail and met his doom.

And then there is *The Warriors*. The
lm is based on a novel by Sol Yurick,
self in turn based on Xenophon's *An-
basis*, an account of a band of Greek
ercenaries fighting their way home,
gainst impossible odds, through ene-
y turf. Yurick translated Xenophon
nto New York street gangs. His book
s a late and lofty entry, steeped in the
one of Camus's *The Stranger*, in the
teen panic" novels of the Fifties and
ixties. Walter Hill, a director whose
aradigm is the western, turned Yurick's
risp, relentless book into the definitive
nage of a New York ruled by territo-
ial gangs, each decorated absurdly and
uling their outposts absolutely.

The movie inspired reports of
heater-lobby riots during its theatri-
al run. It's a cult object now,
etishized on websites, celebrated in
ip-hop by Puff Daddy and the Wu-
Tang Clan, and cherished by New
Yorkers my age, we who preen in our
old fears, for mythologizing the crime-
uled New York of the Seventies more



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SOLUTION TO THE NOVEMBER PUZZLE

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NOTES FOR "SENSITIVITY TRAINING—A POEM":

*Puzzle editing by Dan Asimov. Anagrams are indicated with an asterisk (*).*

SENSITIVE CLUES: A. c-Y-CLI-c.; B. psy*-chic; C. bo(rdeua*)x; D. K-am(1-K)aze; E. boutique (hidden); F. champ-(ag)ne; G. matricide*; H. fall-ac(1)es; I. p(harm)ac[if]ist.

ACROSS: 10. *; 11. a-F-fable; 13. *; 15. no-ti(at)s (rev.); 17. so-fu(n) (rev.); 21. oh me*; 22. Sah*-l; 24. lil(y); 26. to-S.S.; 27. ant-ic(e); 30. sin(g)s; 32. hidden; 33. a(lie)ns; 35. homophone; 37. K(is)s.

DOWN: 1. homophone; 2. (t)heft; 3. a-E-1 (rev.); 4. li(bid)os (rev.); 5. *; 6. S(e)ven; 7. an-a; 8. two mngs.; 9. *; 16. teens-iest; 19. O-hi-O; 20. *; 23. (t)act; 24. lieu(tenant); 28. coup-E.; 29. ail-1 (rev.); 31. se[nor]as; 34. She(a); 36. da-ay(overlapped).

sweetly and absurdly than *Kojak* or *The French Connection*. For, in the film, it is the gang members themselves who become the ultimate victims of the city's chaos. Even the Warriors wish they'd stayed home.

For me, a fifteen-year-old dogging the steps of the crew as they filmed, it was only perfect that a fake gang had occupied Hoyt-Schermerhorn's fake platform. The film was etching my own image of the city into legend, and for me it had begun its work even before its public life. (In fact, I couldn't imagine that anyone would want to see it.) Yurick's book has just been reissued again, with a movie still on the jacket and a long new introduction, detailing the classical and existentialist roots of the project, and fascinating for its rueful and erudite perplexity that this least ambitious of his books should be the one to survive: "There hasn't been one film made in the United States that I would consider seeing five times, as many who loved the film version of *The Warriors* did." Years later, by chance, I met the wizened Yurick on a train platform, though not the subway. We disembarked together in Providence, Rhode Island, each a guest at the same literary conference, and, unknowingly, companion riders on an Amtrak from New York. Our hosts had failed to meet our train, and as the locals all scattered to their cars, the family members or lovers to their reunions, we were left to discover each other and our dilemma. Yurick shrugged fatalistically—should we have expected better? He summed his perspective in a sole world-weary suggestion: "Wanna nosh?"

Michael Lesy's 1973 book *Wisconsin Death Trip* is a mosaic of vintage photographs and newspaper accounts of eccentric behavior and spastic violence in turn-of-the-century rural Wisconsin. It makes a case, not polemically but by a flood of miniature evidence, that stirring just under the skin of this historical site is mayhem, sexuality, the possibility of despair. The book is a corrective to homilies of a pastoral American countryside, a catalogue of unaccountable indigenous lust, grief, revenge, and sudden joy.

As my newspaper clippings [illegible] "TWO ARE KILLED BY POLICE IN GUN BATTLE, 1/23/73: Neither of the slain men was immediately identified. But the police said that one of them had been wanted for several bank robberies and for allegedly shooting at policemen last Wednesday night in the Hoyt-Schermerhorn Street subway station . . ." "WOMAN HURT IN SUBWAY FALL, 6/19/58: A 55-year-old woman was critically injured yesterday when she fell or jumped in front of a southbound IND express train at the Hoyt-Schermerhorn Street station in Brooklyn. . . . Service on the southbound tracks of the A line was interrupted for fifty-three minutes." "37 HURT IN CRASH OF TWO IND TRAINS, One Rams Rear of Another in Downtown Brooklyn During Evening Rush, 7/18/70: . . . there was a rending of metal at the crash, she said, and then the car tilted. All the lights went out. She said there were sparks and the car filled with smoke. The girl said she was thrown to the floor and, terrified, began screaming . . ." "YOUTH ARRESTED WITH GUN, 5/26/89: A 13-year-old Brooklyn youth was arrested yesterday morning with a fully loaded, 9-millimeter handgun, and he showed up later in the day to ask the New York City transit police when he would get his gun back." "STRANGER PUSHES WOMAN TO DEATH UNDER A TRAIN, 2/2/75: A 25-year-old woman was thrown to her death in front of an onrushing subway train in Brooklyn yesterday evening by a man who apparently was a total stranger to her, the police said. . . . The incident took place at about 6:15 P.M. in the Hoyt-Schermerhorn Street IND station, which was crowded with shoppers at the time. According to witnesses, including the train motorman . . . [the] man suddenly stepped up to the victim, who had her back to him, and pushed her forward in front of the train without saying a word . . ." "400 BOYCOTTING STUDENTS RIOT, HURL BRICKS, BEAT OTHER YOUTHS, 2/18/65: Four hundred boycotting Negro students broke through police barricades outside [illegible] education headquarters in Brooklyn yesterday in a brick-throwing, window-breaking riot. . . . The disturbance spread over a two-mile area and ont[illegible] subway trains and stations. . . . A group of 60 youths attacked a group of [illegible] white high school students on the Clinton-IND's GG line. . . . The [illegible] were apprehended at the Hoyt-Schermerhorn Station by 15 transit policemen . . ." "300 IN SUBWAY HELP TILT CAR AND RELEASE BOY'S WEDGED FOOT, 9/2/70: A rescue team of subway passengers hastily organized by three transit patrolmen, tipped back a 54-ton subway car last night to free an 11-year-old boy whose foot was wedged between the car and the platform at a downtown Brooklyn station. The boy . . . was running for an IND A train when his leg was caught between the platform and train at the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station."

Contemplation of the density of meanings at a given site becomes, in the end, like Lesy's scrapbook, a tidal experience. The lapping of successive human moments forms a pulse or current, like the lapping of trains through the underground tunnels, or like the Doppler-effect fading of certain memories from the planet, as they're recalled for the penultimate time, and then the last: when will the last person to have purchased panty hose or a razor at Loeser's pass from the earth? When will the last of those 300 who rocked the train car off the boy's pinned leg, or the last of those 400 Negro boycotters, be gone?

A kid raised inside the liberal sentiments of a middle-class family yet living in an area fringed with crime and poverty met a choice. It was possible to identify with and assimilate to the harsher truths of the street, and so toughen, somewhat, to fear. Alternately, a kid could carry his parents' sensitivities, and standards, with him, out of doors. The price was obvious. Most of us, whether we ended in one camp or another, wavered. I was a "good" kid, and a bullied one, yet I recall dozens of moments when I slid briefly across the separation line. It was on a basketball court directly across from Hoyt-Schermerhorn's entrance where I allowed myself to meld com-

icitly into a crowd of Puerto Rican ds, with whom I'd been playing, as ey briefly halted our game to harass id threaten a single Asian man, a gay an, off a neighboring court. I wasn't olent; the incident hardly was. But e man was the boyfriend of a pal of y mother's, and I'd been a guest in eir elegant town house. When my om's friend, a gay man considerably skier than his young lover, returned the court with a baseball bat and, llowing at us, broke up the game, nt us scurrying, his eyes met mine id I was disgraced, wrenched between ncurrent selves.

The moment was precursor to a orse one. This was the summer beveen high school and college, which to say the verge of my escape from rooklyn for most of fifteen years. I've me to understand how fraught that oment was for me, as I considered or fused to consider what I was involntarily carrying with me out of the rticulars of my childhood environent. My girlfriend was from upstate ew York but living in my city, my eighborhood, for that summer before e both embarked to college. She orked nights as a waitress in Manttan and rode, yes, the A train, into loyt-Schermerhorn. She was frightned, as she perhaps should have been, walk the several blocks home from at station after eleven, and so I'd romised always to meet her. I often ghtly mocked her fear—but that bit of vercompensation, lousy as it sounds, asn't my crime.

My crime was that one night, going the station to pick her up, I impulvely waited in shadow by the enance instead of making myself visible. had no plan. I was fooling around. he looked for me, evidently afraid to and there waiting alone, as she abolutely should have been: it was a difrent thing to walk swiftly home than was to linger. I could have stepped rward easily, but instead my stupid ipe distended, and I just watched her. nd then, as she began walking home ithout me, I followed her.

I think I was certain she'd turn and e me, and that it would be oddly nny, but she never did. She was fraid to turn to see whose footsteps llowed her, of course. I trailed her ome, compounding my mistake with each accelerating footstep, until I at last overtook her just outside the door. While I tried to explain, she trembled, in fear that had converted immediately, and rightly, to rage. Denial has covered any recollection of my words by now, but I know they were hopelessly inadequate to repair what I'd told myself was a harmless joke—though I was walking behind her I'd still been protecting her, hadn't I?—and was actually such a cruel joke it wasn't a joke at all. Although I'd hardly claim to be Patty Hearst, there was a touch of the Stockholm syndrome in my behavior. I was bestowing on another a trace, or more than a trace, of fears I'd absorbed for years.

Here's where I am: in the subway, but not on a train. I'm standing on one platform, gazing at another. Moaning trains roll in, obscuring my view; I wait for them to pass. The far platform, the one I'm inspecting, isn't lit. The tiles along the abandoned platform's wall are stained—I mean, more than in some ordinary way—and the stairwells are caged and locked, top and bottom. Nothing's happening there, and it's happening round the clock.

I've been haunting this place lately, though the more time I spend, the further it reels from my grasp. And, increasingly, I'm drawing looks from other passengers on the platforms, and upstairs, at the station's mezzanine level. Subway stations—the platforms and stairwells and tunnels, the passages themselves—are sites of deep and willed invisibility. Even the geekiest transit buffs adore the trains, not the stations. By lingering here, I've set off miniature alarms in nearby minds, including my own. I've allied myself with the malingerers not on their way to somewhere else. My investigation of this place reeks of a futility so deep it shades toward horror.

By the same law of meticulously observed abnormalities that causes loopers to stand out, my spying at Hoyt-Schermerhorn triggers a rustle of disquiet. I'm not here for a train. What I'm trying to do maybe can't be done: inhabit and understand the Hoyt-Schermerhorn station as a place. Worse, I'm trying to remember it, to restore it to its home in *time*. There's no greater perversity, since a subway station is a sinkhole of destroyed and thwarted time. By standing here trying to remember Hoyt-Schermerhorn I've only triggered its profoundest resistance: I'm using it wrong.

Yet I'm stubborn. This was my first subway memory, the tunnel, those ruined Loeser's windows. I've returned to reclaim the seed of a lifelong romance, a New Yorker's typical romance with our limitless secret neighborhood, the one running beneath all the others. Nothing subsequent, not hundreds of high school days, not *The Warriors*, or my own feeble crimes, can displace this memory's primacy or fade its color. I held my mother's hand. I was being taken to her office, in Manhattan. Perhaps it was a day off from school, I don't know. I rode the subway for the first time I can recall, but I don't remember the train. I remember the station. ■

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**1-3** U.S. Department of Justice; **4** Colum Lynch, *Washington Post* (N.Y.C.); **5** Halliburton (Houston, Tex.); **6-7** Office of the Comptroller (N.Y.C.); **8** U.S. Department of Homeland Security; **9-10** Program Executive Office for Ammunition (Picatinny Arsenal, N.J.); **11** *Harper's* Research; **12-13** U.S. Department of Defense; **14** PoliticalMoneyLine (Washington); **15-16** Ballot Access News (San Francisco); **17** Green Party (Washington); **18-19** Juliet B. Schor, Boston College (Boston); **20** Delta Air Lines (Atlanta); **21** American Sociological Association (Washington); **22-23** The Brookings Institution (Washington); **24–25** *Harper's* Research; **26** National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Silver Spring, Md.); **27** *Times-Picayune* (Jefferson Parish, La.); **28** Department of Health (London); **29** International Atomic Energy Agency (Vienna); **30** *Harper's* Research; **31** Embassy of the Republic of Sudan (London); **32** British High Commission (Wellington, New Zealand); **33** *Harper's* Research; **34-35** State Police Headquarters (Pordenone, Italy); **36** Richard Beeston (Baghdad); **37** Select (N.Y.C.); **38** Virgin Group (London); **39** Waseda University (Tokyo).

# INTRODUCTION TO SPEECH

*By Ron Carlson*

I've always liked visual aids. Long before I took Introduction to Speech and met Mrs. Ring, I was showing things as I talked to people. In my career as a salesman for Double American, making six calls a day five days a week, I have always employed visual aids. I never just walked in and tried to sell paper. I'm talking about going into Top Tech or Manager Plus and meeting with Sandy or Joe and showing them my new matchbooks or the nail from a flat tire or an agate I'd found. It just evolved with me. Part of it was to overcome that little thing, my shyness, but also I like to have something I can hand to another person. I've got a shoebox with every nail from every flat tire I've ever had. It's convincing, is what it is. People like to have the fact in their hand.

As a visual aid in my first speech, I brought in my old metal Goodfind tackle box. I took my position behind the shaky pine lectern, weight equally distributed on both feet, and I started talking about the fishing I'd done here and there—trips with my father to the mountains in Wyoming, fishing the lakes and rivers there—and each time I mentioned how old I had been or what river it was, I pulled a lure from the tray and showed it. I didn't pass these things around; they had hooks.

*Ron Carlson's most recent book is his story collection* A Kind of Flying (W. W. Norton)

Our class was twenty-two people in a cramped annex classroom at Arcadia Community College. It was summer session, our slow time at Double American, which is why our boss, Tommy Candle, wanted us to take the class. At our sales breakfast, he said: "Finish the course with a B or better and we're giving you a one percent commission raise. I know the class is going to help as we ready for the upturn." He tapped his new copy of *All Star Sales Strategies*. "I read about what it can do for personal presentation." Then he pointed at us one at a time, as if this was all just business and he couldn't ever hurt our feelings. "Danielle, this is going to get you looking right at the customer. Sammy, this is going to help you stand still and when you stand, stand up straight. And, Andy, I think this will open you up, get you talking." He was doing everything he could to shore up the company, including adopting a highway, but I could feel that Double American was slipping away.

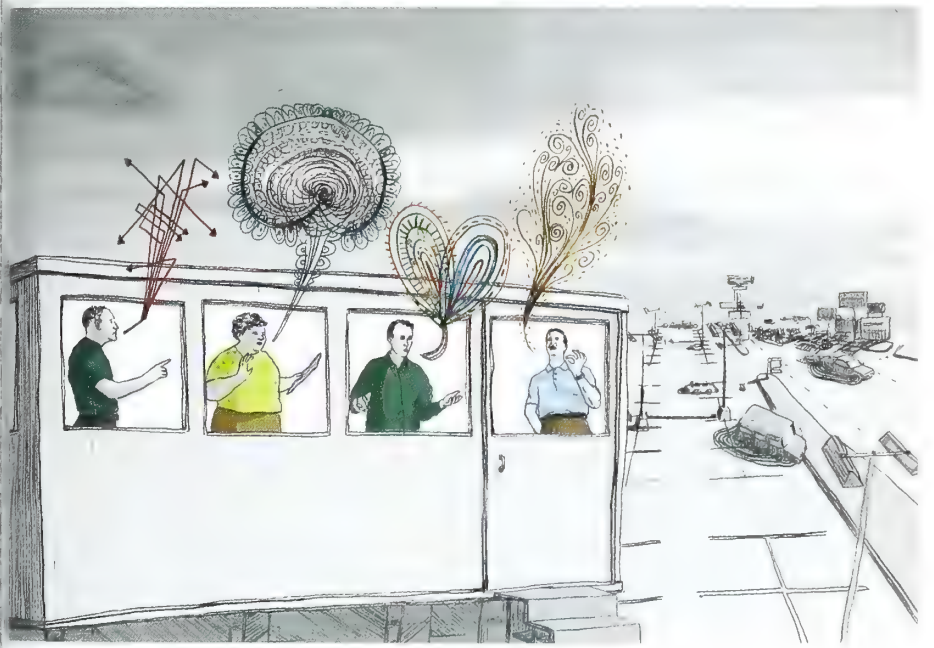
It was strange for me in Introduction to Speech. It felt as if I liked giving speeches. Not liked, but something. I felt different in front of the class, different than at any other time in my life. For some reason even the twenty-one other students didn't give me any inhibitions. Inhibitions can hurt a speech. Mrs. Ring said [illegible] eye contact, awkward or absent gesticulation, improper use of the hands, or nervous shifting could also hurt a speech. Mrs. Ring always stood by the door when students gave their speeches. She was a really pretty young woman who wore print dresses all summer. Sam, who is tough on women, called her Chubby.

So with my Visual Aid speech I was uninhibited, and I went through the lures in my metal tackle box as I grew older in my story: the plastic worms that I never ever cared for and don't know why I didn't just throw away, and in fact, during the speech, I did throw them away; the silver spinners, especially the Lusky spinners with the red gems, the plastic flatfish yellow and green with their triple hooks, and finally the flies, one so tiny I knew when I held it on my finger that no one could see it. Then in my speech, this first speech, I went right ahead and showed what I came to show. I have always tried to say what I mean.

The last part of my Visual Aid speech was when I told about meeting Laurie and how we'd been dating and how I'd shown her, just as I'd shown the class, all my tackle, and how she wanted me to take her fishing. "But," I said, "on our way to Pinecrest there was an accident. We were in my old Volkswagen bug. This box was up front in the trunk." Here I stopped and turned the tackle box around to where it's dented in. I'd never really told the

ry to anyone this way. I saw the tack-
box in my garage when I was look-
g for visual aids, and I thought it
uld make a good speech, and right
w in front of everyone I realized I
d crossed the line. I ran my fingers
rough the dent and felt it all again
st like that. Then I heard a noise,
hich turned out to be a little sob from
anielle, who is a good friend of mine
t not one to cry, and I looked up and
w about half the class wiping their
es and the other half staring at me
thout moving, and I saw Mrs. Ring
the door with both her hands flat
against her checks, and
so I just said, "The end."

Oh, for chrissakes," Sam said
er class as we walked with Danielle
our cars in the dry hot night. "He
lls out the dead-girlfriend card in
e first speech, and now the hefty



rs. Ring wants to be there for him.
hat hurts, big boy. You put some of
ie rest of us, especially Sammy
Salle, in the shade. What am I go-
g to do? All my old girlfriends . . ."

"A thousand of them . . . ,"
anielle said. She was still poking at
er eyes with a Kleenex.

". . . are still alive." He looked at
e. "As far as I know."

After my speech, Mrs. Ring had
me over to my desk and put her hand
on my shoulder and called on Sammy to do his speech. He was slick. He said, "Listen, Mrs. Ring, in light of what we've just heard, maybe we should close her down for today and I'll start off on Thursday night."

In the parking lot, at Danielle's Jetta, she asked us if we were coming over. She liked Sam and me to come over to her new Scottsdale condo after class and have a beer with her husband, Terry, and give the play-by-play. Sam took over at such meetings and after four classes he had every woman nicknamed: Wonderbra, the Tattoo, Wifey, and, of course, Chubby, for our dear teacher. Sam was a bright guy, but he used it like a blade.

I begged off tonight because I knew I would be the only subject for discussion, and I'd had enough of that since leaving the building. I felt a little funny after giving the speech. "I've got to get busy tomorrow; my quota is miles and miles from here." The truth was I had two calls, and I knew they would both be dry.

"Quotas are savage," Sam said. He pointed at Danielle. "No one will meet a quota in this world. Not going to happen."

She shrugged. "It's quiet."

"It's gruesome," he said. "And, boys and girls, Double American will never see the coming upturn. The one percent we're getting is going to save exactly no one."

"It might," Danielle said. "Terry says this is a slump."

"Bless Terry and his dreamy wife," Sam said. "We've got speech class compliments of a dumb boss, and this guy here," he jerked a thumb at me, "has just about ruined that. Poor Laurie, may she rest in peace. That was five years ago?"

"Six," I said.

"Get married," Danielle said. "Marry that girl out at Buzzco."

"You're seeing Maya?" Sam said.

I just looked at him.

He held up his hands. "Hey, I barely know her."

My Friday calls were routine. Milltech was fully stocked with paper, and I knew it, but Doug was glad to see me, and we walked around a little bit checking the supply closets.

Driving over to Buzzco, I was thinking about my next speech, what it would be, and if Maya was going to be working up front. Sure enough, Maya was on the counter as she was every Friday. We'd gone out to coffee the last three times I'd seen her; she'd saved her break until eleven and we'd slip away. When she saw me, she went to her desk, and I told her she wouldn't need her sweater. It was already a hundred and three. "I'm getting my purse," she said. "It's my turn to buy." Maya's thirty and a good manager. She has terrific short dark hair, which looks as if it might have been cut for efficiency, but in fact has real flair. Her face is dark, what I call a sleep-deprivation tan; it was the way I looked in college. She has been through a big bad divorce this year that keeps the men away. When we went for coffee the first time, I asked her if she came along because she suspected I wasn't a threat. She doesn't smile much, but she smiled [illegible] I think because it was true.

But she likes [illegible] has done at Buzzco [illegible] stock paper. He [illegible] full, but she's [illegible] der the [illegible]

stration by Leif Parsons

conference room. They've got paper until Christmas wears out.

"I heard you gave a great speech," she said.

"This isn't Sammy's account. He's not supposed to call you."

"Danielle called. She said you broke everybody's heart."

Maya climbed into my Oldsmobile, a car they've stopped making.

This was where, if I was any other lonely guy and not me in my loneliness, I would have said, "What do I say to break your heart?" or something flirtatious, but it has been proven to me that I am not flirtatious. I've seen Sammy say some things, funny stuff that always gets the conversation over the empty canyon, but I can't do it. For me it would be like reading from cards. In Russian.

I drove us to the Pen, the grill at the edge of town, but I could tell there was something wrong with me. It was true that I was thinking about my next speech, but regardless, I could not step up. Maya said, "It's Friday and I'm tempted to have me a Corona," and she ordered that and a bowl of the tortilla chips and salsa. We'd never had the chips before. We always got coffee and one lemon Danish, and we'd had fun some days cutting it in half with a knife, like who is going to get the bigger piece, the most lemon, like that. So with Maya what it all came down to was simple: I could not order the beer. What was wrong with me? I was almost unemployed and it was Friday and I could see the sunny desert outside the front window of the Pen running from here to the horizon, and I ordered the coffee with cream the way I always have. I knew all about it. I saw her look at me and I watched her face adjust, chin up, which was the absolute end of me. She drank about two sips of that beer, total, while I nursed my coffee. After the twenty minutes, she put a ten on the table and stood up. I couldn't speak. I could barely watch.

We didn't talk all the way back, and I could feel each mile adding up, heavy and impenetrable. When she got out of the car in the Bueco lot, her voice was different.

"Can you leave just one ream of red?" she asked. "Big Bill's dog is lost and he wants to put up some flyers."

I retrieved the package of red pa-

[illegible] like Sammy, a military guy, whose [illegible] bullets from his work on machine guns. So he kept passing bullets as he spoke, and he had us hold them against our arms and necks and heads, just imagining the touch, he called it. He kept alluding to the fact that he might have a machine gun himself, but that was between him and his god, as he called it. He said if he wanted to buy a little bitty pistol, he who had served honorably in the army would have to undergo a background check. I liked the speech, even the description of the way the bullet tumbles at 2,000 feet per second and creates such a terrible exit wound. He called that wound the price of freedom, and Sammy snorted, which he should not have done. The military guy, Captain Bell, came over to Sammy's desk and took his bullet, saying again, "The price of freedom."

Danielle has real trouble making eye contact. In fact, she makes no eye contact. She looks at a place on the ceiling just over my head or she looks at her visual aid. Her speech was called "Facets of a Marriage," and she talked about the twelve sides of a good marriage, and then she held up her big fat diamond ring, finally passing it around for everyone to ooh and aah over the twelve different facets. When Danielle put it in the first girl's hand, she said, "Now, I'm going to want this back." Everyone laughed. Humor, Mrs. Ring told us, when used right is just like the proper spice.

Sammy threw his old speech away and gave a new one about adopting a highway, based on our experience with the section of highway that Double American Paper Company adopted, and it was a funny speech about his family [illegible] there had been [illegible] background check, he would [illegible] prevented from adopting even a

[illegible] or a driveway. For his visual [illegible] had a baby blanket and m[illegible] [illegible] Route 123, a chunk [illegible] asphalt, which in the hea[illegible] the moment he kissed, and th[illegible] took over for Danielle to hold.

I could see Captain Bell glow[illegible] ing at Sammy. He didn't like that crack about a background check.

Introduction to Speech had bec[illegible] the best thing in my little life, a[illegible] could tell by the way we three [illegible] Danielle's husband about the class that they were enjoying it, too. Terry said, "How'd Wonderbra like that diamond?" We talked about the people and guessed at what we'd do next. Mrs. Ring had asked for a Process speech, steps in a process, which could include a demonstration.

Sammy said, "I hope Tattoo will show the other half of that spider that's trying to crawl out the back of her pants."

"That's a karmic circle," Danielle said.

"Excellent," Sammy said. "I could use some karma."

When my girlfriend Laurie was killed, a whole bunch of people, mainly her family, told me to stop blaming myself, that it wasn't my fault. I guess I was acting funny, and it's tough to know what to say to someone who walks away from a wrecked car. I had a good double set of stitches into my hairline four inches, and they helped, but I didn't blame myself. The thing is: I didn't know what to think, how to even begin sorting it all out. A week went by like that, then a month and they took out my stitches, and then a year and then these years. My scars have all healed perfectly. I could show you the place and you'd doubt me.

The Steps in a Process speeches were terrific. One of the high school girls did hers on making dreadlocks, using her friend as the model. The guy Sammy calls Mr. Wizard used his speech to explain the intermittent windshield wiper, how it works, and he told a sad story about the [illegible]. It was a great speech. Tat[illegible]

dn't show us her beautiful backside
it instead explained the two-color
ttoo, red and blue, what the ink is
d how it works. She showed us a
ok of samples with prices, which
ade me wonder what kind of
eech this was. She closed with the
t that with her tattoos, all twenty-
o and one-half of them, she no
nger felt like just anybody. Sammy
ked her what was with one half a
ttoo, but Mrs. Ring reminded him
the time again. Tattoo, whose real
me was Darla Church, gave Sam-
y a saucy grin and sat down. I will
y that she's a woman that when
e sits in front of you in class, it is
rd not to look at the top of that
ird tattoo coming out of the back
her pants. It looks to me like one
the things you find on old maps to
ure which way is north.

I already knew Danielle was going to
the process of paper making, be-
use I'd helped her carry some of her
ar in. She went through the steps:
redding the fiber, the mixing, the
essing on the screen, but what was
ol was she had examples of five kinds
paper she'd already made. This was
per she'd made from Terry's shred-
d underwear (which got a good
igh), and from garbage yarn from
r adopted highway, and some threads
m palm fronds, and some felt from
old hat, and a huge sheet of paper
ade with eggshells. It was a good top-
for Danielle, because she had to keep
oving and showing stuff, and so her
e-contact problem wasn't so promi-
nt. I could see how Danielle's
eech, if you weren't up to your eye-
lls in paper already, might make you
nt to go home and make some.

Sammy's process was the true story
picking up women, which he said
s part of an old and respected sci-
ce that included such illustrious in-
stigators as Ben Franklin, who wrote
eight-point treatise on how to
oose a mistress. I could see that his
ening struck a note of fear in Mrs.
ng, whom I knew I now had a crush
. The way you know you have a
ish on someone is that you know
thout looking where they are in the
om. I did not want my slippery friend
mmy to say anything coarse in her
esence. That's another way I knew.
t Sammy walked the line. He went
for the humor in making it all sound scientific, and most of the class, but not all, thought he was funny. He closed with the fact that his methods always worked, one hundred percent of the time, but that he wasn't as sure of what to do with the women once he had picked them up. In fact, he admitted, he was relatively terrible in the "keep women" department, and that would be his next speech.

When Mrs. Ring called on me this time, I felt that strange feeling that has a little fear in it, but it was a feeling I was honest to God starting to like. I went to the front of the room and started in by taking out a box of kitchen matches and holding one up. I'm hooked, as I said, on visual aids. But I knew for a fact that if I held up a match I'd have every eye, and I did. I then launched into the history of the match. I got the idea one night when I was looking at the cases of my matchbook collection. What's the deal on matches? Where did they come from? Five hours later, as the library was closing, I had traced the development of the match, and there is some weird stuff in there. For a long time, if a guy wanted a light, he had to carry two ingredients and mix them together, and later there was a deal called the Promethean Match, which is a slim glass tube. You broke it, and the wick inside burst into flame so you could light your stogie. You had to be careful not to sit on the thing. Anyway, my speech brought us all the way back to the safety match, which I then lit, and my classmates applauded, and I caught Mrs. Ring smiling at me.

The class was ninety minutes, and we had time for one more, so this is when Captain Bell went up to the front. He moved our shaky wooden podium to one side and started pacing back and forth talking about self-defense. Personal safety, he told us, is a matter of personal responsibility. We can't always be calling the cops. And criminals are everywhere. Assailants are everywhere. Assailants, many times, are in surprising and unexpected places, like outside the dry cleaners or the pizza place. There is a crime committed every second or something. Every two seconds. Frequently. We need to learn to protect and defend ourselves. Then he said

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he needed a volunteer. Sammy was on the other side of Danielle or else I would have stopped him. Sammy stood up and went forward. "You don't have that machine gun on you, do you?" he asked Captain Bell. The Captain did not smile. He handed Sammy a wooden ruler.

"This is a butcher knife," he told us. "The assailant has a butcher knife and confronts you head-on." Sammy faced the Captain, holding the ruler as a knife. "Now," the Captain said, "approach me."

Sammy stepped toward the Captain. We were all looking at the ruler when Captain Bell grabbed Sammy's other hand and pulled him around in a bear hug and choke hold. With Sammy almost aloft like that, the Captain continued explaining and pointing at the attack points: the eyes, the neck, the gut, the groin. Sammy turned red but smiled, and the Captain put him down. "It doesn't take great strength," Captain Bell said. "But you have to be alert, and when you act you have to be fully committed."

He turned his back on Sammy, saying, "Now attack me from the rear." The Captain talked all through what happened next. Sammy looked stupid tiptoeing up with the ruler, like a stupid assassin, and he was mugging for the class, especially Tattoo, Darla Church, when Captain Bell grabbed him. He seized his left wrist and slapped the ruler clear to the back wall with his other hand. Then came a moment in Introduction to Speech that I will never forget. Captain Bell was still talking, saying, "When this sleazebag thinks he has the upper hand with his big knife, you jolt the forearm and get rid of the weapon. Keep track of where it goes; you might need it later. Then an arm twist, just so, and if he resists further . . ." Sammy had ceased resisting. He was a comical rag doll who was suddenly upside down at his full length, his two legs like crazy hands on a bad clock wheeling toward the ceiling. It was some kind of full flip. People gasped, and we all reflexively slid back. Sammy continued in his fabulous arc, past noon, one, two, suddenly parallel to the floor, his one shoe striking the wooden chalk tray under the blackboard like a hammer, splintering it and sending chalk dust through the room. The same second he [illegible] the floor, and I heard Sam[illegible] tle "oh."

Mrs. Ring quickly came to the front of the room and knelt by Sammy, and I joined her alongside of Tattoo and a couple of other students. Mrs. Ring's light blue dress, printed with black diamonds, fell open as she bent to Sammy, and I looked deeply into those shadows, her gleaming breasts, the tiny bra clasp in front. Captain Bell was still closing his speech, walking around us explaining that even with your assailant on the ground, he was still a danger. He was talking like he wanted to further his assault, and I worried that he might mistake me for an assailant. Sammy hadn't passed out, but he was gray. He was looking at me, and he started to speak when he simply turned his head and vomited into Mrs. Ring's lap.

The next week I started skipping calls. It was too hard to go in to these companies and have folks I'd known for years feel bad about not needing any paper. We'd used up all the small talk. I'd shown them all my visual aids, matchbooks, etc. I did have the story about Sammy in speech class, but I didn't want to tell that right away, because it wasn't exactly over. Sammy was bent on revenge. Not bent but ready for revenge, and not ready but raging, an inferno, to hurt Captain Bell.

I didn't exactly know what to do with myself. I wasn't going to work. I put on my answering machine and looked around my little house. We had one speech left, a Speech to Convince, and there wasn't a convincing thing in my place.

I went to the library because it had helped me with that last speech. Inside, the old folks were reading all their hometown papers. They were pretty convincing. It was quiet in there, and I had written a fair speech on matches at the one table, but I couldn't get an idea in my head.

I could make no breakthrough, but I came to understand something new about Introduction to Speech class. I wanted to write a Speech to Convince that would convince Mrs. Ring that I was interesting. In fact, I understood, I was only speaking to her. I'd had her on my mind e[illegible] day, I guess, and looking bac[illegible] could see it. This feeling gener[illegible] confused me. She was my teach[illegible], and I'd seen her full breasts in [illegible] tuxedo underwear, but it was m[illegible] e than that. When she stood in [illegible] doorway in her dresses, I wante[illegible] o say something in my speeches t[illegible] at would make her admire me. I did[illegible]'t want to pass with a B or bette[illegible] I wanted Mrs. Ring.

Sammy's speech was the m[illegible]t amazing speech I've ever heard[illegible] in person. He wore a tie and sto[illegible]d squarely behind the podium. [illegible]e started with personal eviden[illegible]: "Most of you in this room, where [illegible]e have shared so many ideas, had [illegible]e chance to see me last week as I p[illegible]- formed a role in Captain Be[illegible]'s speech on self-defense." Here [illegible]e nodded at Bell and went on. "Mos[illegible]t you saw me rise into the air ab[illegible]t here," he pointed up, "and contin[illegible]e around until I came back to ea[illegible]h about there." He pointed down t[illegible]s time. "Listen, it was a long trip, an[illegible] I had a lot of time to think while I [illegible]s in the air." Sammy's eye contact [illegible]s strong, and he stayed squarely b[illegible]- anced on both feet, not shifting n[illegible]- vously. He was headed for some [illegible]g points. "My first thought was, 'W[illegible]y does Captain Bell want to hurt m[illegible]?' And there are many legitimate [illegible]- swers to that question, most of th[illegible]m something like, 'Because I an[illegible]a smart-ass.' I've been hurt before [illegible]r it. That doesn't make it right."

But what he went on to say [illegible]s about forgiveness. He said he'd n[illegible]t someone, talked to her, laid out [illegible]s anger, and she had met his anger w[illegible]h calmness, and she had talked h[illegible]m down from the mountain of [illegible] anger—that was his phrase, "mou[illegible]- tain"—and that he was convinced th[illegible] forgiveness was more powerful th[illegible]n revenge, and if we weren't convinc[illegible]d of this we should watch this visual a[illegible]d. With that he moved from behind t[illegible]e lectern and stepped over to Da[illegible]n Church. She stood up wrapped in h[illegible]r luxurious tattoos, and they kissed. "I hope that if kissing in the old anne[illegible]s against school rules, you'll forgive [illegible]s for it," Sammy said. "And now to cl[illegible]se my speech I'm going to grab Capta[illegible]n Bell by the hand that threw me fo[illegible]r

op." He went over and shook Cap-
in Bell's hand and said, "No hard
elings. That's my whole speech."
There was quite a bit of applause in
e classroom. Sammy had become a
ccessful speech giver, and I was hap-
for him.
After class he had another surprise
r me. He and Darla were waiting by
y Oldsmobile. "Did Tommy Candle
ll you what I'm doing?"
"No," I said.
"I'm thinking of letting it go."
"Quit? You can't quit. You are Mr.
ouble American; you're good at it.
sides, I quit."
I looked at him and he went on. "I
d. He's going to give my accounts
you and Danielle."
"Come on."
"No, I did. We're going way over to
lver City." Darla, already around
mmy's arm, kissed his neck.
"Your brother's barbershop."
"That's what it is. I've already
got my license." Now he
shook my hand.

started my last speech this way:
m about to give you each a feeling,
d I want you to remember this feel-
g as I talk about writing a letter, be-
use it is this feeling that will ulti-
ately convince you to write a letter,
t me or any of my remarks or visu-
aids, but this feeling, the feeling I'm
out to give you. So remember the
eling. Now. Here it comes. Get ready
your feeling."
I was having a little fun with my
eech, but at the same time I was ges-
ring accurately but not too much,
d I made eye contact by moving my
ad slowly from left to right and back
ain. I was gripping the edge of the
nsy lectern, but not too tight.
"I've written you each a personal let-
. I know a little and sometimes a
, it seems, about you from all of our
eeches, and I've written a letter to
u and only to you, and I've written
e letter on paper with this pen"—I
ld my old ballpoint aloft, my visual
—"and I've sealed each letter in a
per envelope. So here is your letter."
Then I passed out the letters to
classmates, and the one envelope
th Mrs. Ring's name on it I hand-
to her.
It was a simple speech about how nice it is to receive a letter. I worked hard on it, each of the letters, but I don't know if I convinced anybody or not. I closed it down with my last visual aid, a silver letter opener, which I held up and then passed around.

Parking at my condo was always a rocky amenity. The lot itself was cratered throughout with potholes, and the metal roofing was heavily damaged. About once a month somebody backs a U-Haul into it and crimps the edge back a foot or two. Stars poke through tears in the metal sheets. Tonight, when I came home from calls in which I moved a couple dozen reams of paper, my order book starting to come to life, I saw a white Saturn in my place under the terrible parking roof. There was somebody in the vehicle.

It was Mrs. Ring.

To see her away from the old campus this way, especially at my place under the ruined roof parked in the oily gravel, stunned me. My heart began gesticulating wildly, but I approached and tapped on her window. I could see her letter from my speech on the dashboard.

Mrs. Ring opened her door and stood out in the night. She said to me, "If it wouldn't be too strange for you . . ." There was a silence as big as they get, a gray thing I'd fallen into a hundred times before. "If you could . . ."

I heard myself speak: "You want me to take you fishing, Mrs. Ring?" I maintained eye contact.

"I've never been," she said. "And there was a lake in your letter." She faltered and grabbed my arm, a touch. "I shouldn't be here."

"No one should be here," I told her. My inhibitions were all gone. I stepped toward her in the dark place between cars, and I put my fingertips on the hip of her dress. "I wrote you a letter."

"I know you did," she said. "I appreciate it." I could smell her powder, sweet and ready. She was as far over the line as I was.

"We could certainly do that, Mrs. Ring," I told her. "We could go out to Big Lake." Hearing myself speak those words, I knew right where my maps were, something I could show her next. ■

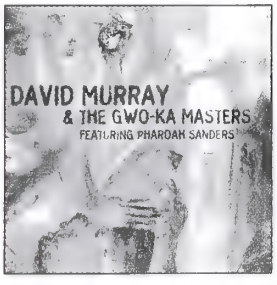

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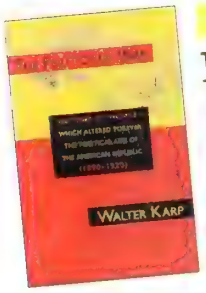



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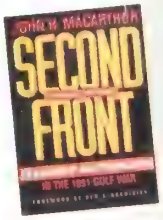

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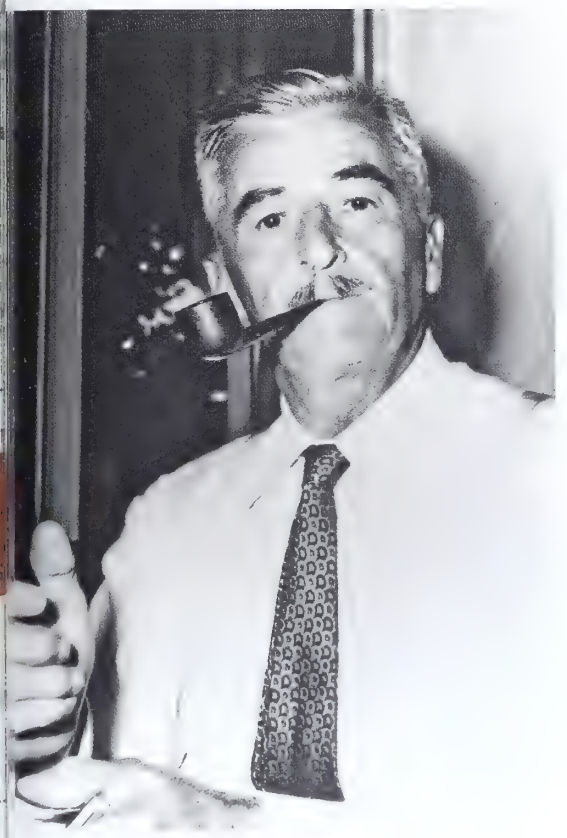
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# NEW BOOKS

*by John Leonard*



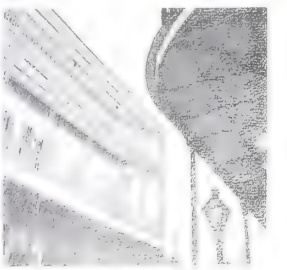
In the summer of 1961, when Ernest Hemingway, after a lifetime of bagging baboons, gazelles, leopards, lions, the big fish, the brave bull, and the smart-mouth Gellhorn, chose at last to bag himself with a twelve-gauge shotgun, this is what William Faulkner said: "I think every man wants to be at least as good as what he writes. And I'm inclined to think that Ernest felt at that time, this was the right thing, in dignity and dignity, to do."

Never mind that Faulkner was at least as depressive as Hemingway and usually a mama's boy (though William stuck to the same bad marriage through serial adulteries rather than start over with a fresh divorce every time he fell in love); that he drank even more, and so ended up more often in a hospital; that he liked nothing better than to ride horses, hunt foxes, and shoot birds, unless it was to play golf or to drink Jack Daniels; and that he also lived past celebrity to exhaustion. What is so striking about Faulkner's remark is his distinction between the writer and the written, as if "what he writes" were a parallel universe and an exalted standard. Talent, Faulkner suggests, comes down like grace. Perhaps we are not worthy. Perhaps we will never measure up. What if performance anxiety is a fatal disease?

Thirty years have passed since Joseph Blotner's monumental two-volume biography of Faulkner, twenty since Blotner's one-volume condensation of himself, and I hope by now everyone has forgiven him for telling us more than we thought we needed to know. Better to have it all, anyway, to sort out for ourselves—every index card, second thought, hindsight, eavesdrop, tattletale, and Peeping Tom—than to have to depend on some intelligence briefing shaded to a partisan prejudice. In order to write ONE MATCHLESS [illegible] NER (HarperCollins, $29.95), Jay Parini has read past the obsessive Blotner, through recently discovered early letters from a young Bill to his parents and late letters from an Old Billy Goat to young women on several continents, plus reams of academic criticism and explication and entire libraries full of writers who were influenced by, if not mortally addicted to, Yoknapatawpha magic realism, such as Toni Morrison and García Márquez.

Because Parini is both a novelist (*The Last Station, Benjamin's Crossing*) and a biographer (John Steinbeck, Robert Frost), he knows how to speed us on our way—past ancestor worship and autodidacticism, Mississippi and New Orleans, Hollywood and Stockholm, farms and boats. Whether Parini is looking over Faulkner's shoulder as Bill reads Swinburne and Joyce and the Russians and the French, before the Parisians start to read *him*—Albert Camus would actually adapt *Requiem for a Nun* for the French stage—or watching him write the screenplay in which Bacall teaches Bogart how to whistle; or sitting still for the IV feed and the oxygen tent; or peeling off masks of outcast, bohemian, poet, drunk, and rogue; or parsing the related themes of "the loss of community, the degradation of nature, the impact





of raw capitalism [illegible] and decisions, Puritan obsessiveness, the waste

[illegible] graph of William Faulkner © Estate of Malcolm Muggeridge/Opale; Photograph courtesy of the collection of William Henry Talbot © Historical Picture Archive/CORBIS; Photograph © New Orleans Collection/CORBIS

of war"; or synopsizing each of the novels; or logging every globe trot, Parini's motor always hums. (Incest! Miscegenation! Corn cobs! Jesus Christ!)

Upon finishing Blotner, we wanted to run in the opposite direction at the mere mention of Faulkner's name. The heroic Parini hurries us directly back to *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* where we are reminded that it was very difficult indeed, if not impossible, for some men to be as good as what they wrote.

And goodness may be the hardest thing to write. GILEAD (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $23), the new Marilynne Robinson novel that we've been waiting for ever since *Housekeeping* (1980), is an evocation and elucidation of goodness—an enquiry into not so much the mechanics as the aesthetics of faith, and how faith helps one man, a dying Protestant preacher, puzzle his way in 1956 toward the right thing to do.

Historically, Gilead is associated with the prophet Elijah. It's also where Gideon defeated the desert-riding, Baal-worshiping Midianites to usher in an era of monarchy and monotheism. But this particular Gilead is a small town in Iowa, nowhere near the Jordan River or the Dead Sea, and not in the least balmy. And the civil war that secured the Union is long since over. And John Ames is neither an Elijah nor a Gideon. Like his pacifist father and his abolitionist grandfather, he is a minister—a seventy-seven-year-old clergyman with a bad heart, a much younger wife, and a six-year-old son to whom he writes this diary as a letter. The book is mostly about fathers and sons and whether they can forgive, much less bless, each other; it's also about where we've been, what we relinquish, and how we bear it. "Oh, I will miss the world!" says Ames. But, much later on: "My present bewilderments are a new territory that



lost before."

[illegible] was but also how inevitable [illegible] sentence seemed, how every syllable nailed its silver meaning. [illegible] likewise [illegible] but [illegible] compassing of God's body. Telling you its story—about violence and [illegible] and the death [illegible] grave in the wilderness—wouldn't begin to convey the eerie eloquence of chapters in which concepts cluster as if they were pilgrims, in which distance huddles with otherness, absence with dreaming, and loneliness with mystery. Blood and ashes find each other, as do darkness and fear, and sorrow and excess, but also water and light, fire and rain, silence and grief, purity and dread, gravity and grace; "an icebox and a pump sink and a pie safe and a wood stove"; fried-egg sandwiches and singing in the streets.

*Gilead* is very funny when it wants to be, between the black walnuts and the hot cider, the fallen acorns and the fat spiders: "I am trying to remember what Finds did before there were telephone wires," the Reverend wonders one sunlit morning at his window. But the real business of this novel, its healing art, is radiance.

Some wounds won't heal. In THE [illegible] (Fourth Estate, $16.95), Michael Chabon asks us to imagine a nine-year-old German boy named Linus, a refugee, an orphan, and a mute, in the English countryside in July 1944. And his constant companion, an African gray parrot named Bruno, [illegible] singing out strings of apparently meaningless numbers. And an [illegible] who goes nameless but ha[illegible] lieved that "the essential business of human beings" is "the dis[illegible]

[illegible] duty and the false [illegible] the noise, the trackless bramble [illegible] though he is haunted by a re[illegible] affliction that "there were men [illegible] natic cryptographers, mad detecti[illegible] who squandered their brilliance [illegible] genius in decoding and interpre[illegible] the messages on cloud formations [illegible] the letters of the Bible recombine [illegible] the spots on butterflies' wings."

Of course, the German bo[illegible] Jewish, the numbers spewed by [illegible] parrot pertain to and somehow [illegible] true the crime of the century, [illegible] the old beekeeper is Sherl[illegible] Holmes—"a great bat of bro[illegible] tweed," his name itself "redol[illegible] now of the fustian and rectitud[illegible] of that vanished era." Mich[illegible] Chabon, who has intrigued and [illegible] founded us before with *The Myste[illegible] of Pittsburgh*, *Wonder Boys*, *[illegible] Amazing Adventures of Kavalie[illegible] & Clay* (a non-graphic novel ab[illegible] graphic artists), and a 500-p[illegible] dreambook about baseball ca[illegible] *Summerland*, does so again by ge[illegible] bending the detective story and [illegible] double-cross espionage thrille[illegible] explore the mystery of blackest [illegible] Almost every character we mee[illegible] *The Final Solution*—Mrs. Panic[illegible] Mr. Shane, Martin Kalb, Const[illegible] Quint, Colonel Threadneedle—[illegible] been borrowed bodily from so[illegible] place else, including the colle[illegible] works of Goethe & Schiller [illegible] Gilbert & Sullivan. I'd rather [illegible] even think about the sudden sw[illegible] in narrative point of view to [illegible] parrot, who recalls with affecti[illegible] garden in Biskra, Algeria, an[illegible] naturally appalled that men sh[illegible] so often smell "of murdered [illegible] boiled bird." Nor will we esc[illegible] from this tricky novella with[illegible] having to think dystopian thou[illegible] about London and the hive.

But so irrational is the hist[illegible] foisted upon the great detective [illegible] he will be denied his deepest p[illegible] ure, the assembling of "a delic[illegible] inexorable lattice of inferences [illegible] catching the light in glints and [illegible] mises": a "deductive crystallizati[illegible] a "paroxysm of guesswork." What [illegible] are left with instead is ruined ir[illegible] lect and teary eyes—Sherl[illegible] Holmes as Oedipus at Colonu[illegible] [illegible] Blasted heath. ■



[illegible] AFG Images/Gilles M[illegible]

# THE RIGHT QUAGMIRE

## Searching history for an imperial alibi

### By Greg Grandin

cussed in this essay:

*olossus: The Price of America's Empire*, by Niall Ferguson. Penguin, 2004. 400 ages. $25.95.

*pire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, by Niall Ferguson. Basic Books, 2003. 352 pages. $35.

*e Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, by Max Boot. Basic Books, 2002. 428 pages. $16.

Historical analogies tend to be as fickle as flattery, as Washington has recently learned. e more the United States strives to in the glories promised by its husiasts, the more it disapnts. Think of recent comisons to World War II. In yearlong buildup to the U.S. asion of Iraq, no analogy was re favored by the Bush Adnistration and its neoconvative advisers than the libion of Western Europe six ades earlier. Like their ndfathers in Paris and Rome, nerican G.I.s in Baghdad ld be graciously received as dom's foot soldiers. In the e way that the United tes brought liberal democ- to Nazi Germany, so would nake the political desert m in the Middle East.

Behind such boosterism, vever, neocons can barely ceal their contempt for a adent American culture. en our politicians and opinmakers reacted to last ng's Abu Ghraib scandal Fallujah uprising with the telltale s of fear and self-doubt, the neocons wered with reproach. Fretting that erica has become, as historian Max t put it in the *Los Angeles Times*, "spoiled" by recent "bloodless victories," they again evoked World War II, but now to scold the American public for its lack of resolve. The "Royal Air Force alone killed 80,000 children in German cities," the *Weekly Standard*'s Christopher Caldwell told readers, with much of the bombing taking place after it was clear that the Allies had won. The problem in Iraq, then, is not that the United States is too brutal but that it isn't brutal enough. Washington's humanitarianism, complained Caldwell, prevents it from taking actions that would "make Iraqis more receptive to the invasion."



Just as comparisons to World War II are sounding strained—either too vain or too gruesome—along comes Niall Ferguson, armed with his latest book, *Colossus: The Price of America's Empire*. Never mind the liberation of Europe, Ferguson tells us, the real analogy to America's current mission in the world is the British Empire.

Ferguson's argument in *Colossus* is clear enough: Empires, not sovereign nation-states, have been the executors of human progress, providing the steadiness and resolve needed to ensure that civilizations can take root and flourish. Ferguson admits that most empires are built upon plunder and butchery, but he contends that the liberal British Empire is history's exception (an argument he explored at greater length in last year's *Empire*, which now reads as a kind of prelude to *Colossus*). From the 1850s to the 1930s, London presided over an extraordinary integration of the world's capital, labor, and commodities; by imposing its rule of law, budgetary policies, currency, and "honest" administrative practices, Britain stimulated economic growth in its colonies. But after World War II, the stock of empire collapsed, devalued by a spreading faith in national sovereignty and universal democracy. The world, writes Ferguson, "embarked on an epochal experiment" and tested the "hypothesis that it was imperialism that caused both poverty and wars and that self-determination would ultimately pave the way to prosperity and peace." That experiment failed, according to Ferguson, as is revealed by the violence and destruction of so many formerly colonized nations.

The world today, Ferguson concludes, threatened as it is by pandemics, terrorists, and tyrants, needs a liberal empire to enforce stability, and the only candidate [illegible] States. [illegible] "democracy on 'rogue states'" without its resolu[illegible] monsly [illegible]

*Grandin is a professor of history at New University and the author of* The Last onial Massacre: Latin America in the Cl l War *(University of Chicago Press).*

tion by Christopher Scott

stretch," a condition that occurs when an empire devotes too much of its finances to military objectives. Ferguson envisions a more harmonious imperial posture, whereby the United States agrees to oversee the creation of an integrated global market because it would profit from such a market; local elites submit to an American empire in exchange for the institutional steadiness needed to generate growth. Everybody wins.

As to what this benevolent empire would look like, apart from scattered references to the wonders of free trade, *Colossus* provides little insight. Many of our new imperialists conjure up visions of a world made prosperous and free by the twin blessings of open markets *and* democratic ideals, but about this latter topic Ferguson is mostly silent. On the pages of *Colossus* indexed under the subject heading "democratization/democracy," one is likely to find a discussion of "law and order," "military force," and "security." Ferguson, in fact, is fairly dismissive of democracy, fearing that it could unleash popular demands for a more equitable distribution of a nation's wealth. Conditions for economic growth, he maintains, are created not by universal suffrage but by secure governments, property rights, and free markets. Although Ferguson calls himself a liberal, his is more a Napoleonic liberalism than the political or even the economic sort. He prescribes a heavy dose of imperial command to make sure that governments remain orderly and obliging.

An "avid admirer of the United States who wants it to succeed in its imperial undertakings," Ferguson is too coy a flatterer to offer only compliments. America may surpass the military might of the British Empire at its apex, but an "absence of a will to power" could prevent Washington from living up to the example set by its predecessor. As a Scot, Ferguson critiques America's political culture with an air of detachment, avoiding the shrillness that often overcomes our homegrown imperialists. The content of his criticism, however, is hardly new. Instead of a buff Nietzschean *Übermensch*—captured by Ferguson with a loving description of Arnold Schwarzenegger's physique—Americ[illegible] ly obese, "consuming on credit, reluctant [illegible] lose interest in protracted undertakings." The "white man's burden," Ferguson says of the average American, "is around his waist."

This debt-laden, dangerously soft America, according to Ferguson, certainly lacks the willingness to stay in a country such as Iraq for the time needed to turn it into a "prosperous capitalist democracy." England's Oxbridge-educated mandarins dedicated their lives to "running internally hot, disease-ridden countries"; America's "brightest and best aspire not to govern Mesopotamia but to manage MTV; not to rule the Hejaz but to run a hedge fund." Indecisive political leadership reinforces the native flaccidness. Were it not for Truman's dithering during the Korean War, *Colossus* relates, America might have crossed the Rubicon—perhaps nuking China, as MacArthur recommended—and thereby claimed its imperial mantle. Similarly, Ferguson reasons that the "growing power of liberalism" checked the United States in Vietnam, preventing it from fighting with the kind of unfailing ruthlessness needed to achieve victory.

Ferguson holds out hope that determined American leaders can overcome these many obstacles. The first step, he says, would be to rein in America's deficit by reducing spending on Social Security and Medicare. Although it is doubtful that such cuts would pry Yale and Harvard graduates away from the spoils of Wall Street, they would make the less privileged leaner and meaner, more willing to shoulder the burdens of empire. Just as poverty drove the Irish and Scots into Britain's colonial army, "illegal immigrants, the jobless," and "convicts" could help fill the ranks of Washington's imperial legion. Ferguson is especially enthusiastic about the possibility that African Americans might become "the Gurkhas of the American empire." And once [illegible] end, what here passes for social democracy, he says, [illegible] racy. Successful empires, Ferguson writes, require "the [illegible] ters and the consent of the [illegible]

As [illegible] historian recently snatched up by Harvard after a brief stint at New York University, Ferguson has become the [illegible] of the American media (*Time* magazine even designated him one of the world's most influential people). Ferguson is able to spin the minutiae of financial stats into colorful lay prose, and he seems to enjoy an open invitation from the op-ed pages of major newspapers. Like his contemporary Damien Hirst, the *enfant terrible* of the British art world, Ferguson has smoothly built his career on sensationalism, abandoning the mundane methodology of his early scholarship—which focused on correspondingly dull topics such as Hamburg monetary policy—to dabble in speculative counterfactuals. His best-selling *Virtual History* invited historians to answer a series of mischievous "what if" questions: What if there had been no American Revolution? What if Nazi Germany had defeated the Soviet Union? Ferguson followed with the equally popular *The Pity of War*, arguing that had Britain stayed out of WWI not only would it have held on to its empire but Nazism, Bolshevism, and WWII all would have been averted. In *Colossus* he supplements his guesswork with questionable assertions based on contrived comparisons. When the book was published last spring, reviewers tended to excuse these distortions as the workings of a "brilliant" and "impish" provocateur (Yale historian John Lewis Gaddis, writing in the *New York Times*, forgave Ferguson for his numerous factual errors, pronouncing him an "imaginative scholar" whose ideas deserve "careful consideration").

Even when honestly played, historical reasoning by analogy is a murky game. In Ferguson's hands the sport is like three-card monty. First we are told that Washington's mission in Iraq resembles nothing so much as the British occupation of Mesopotamia in the early twentieth century. But that experiment, Ferguson grudgingly admits, didn't turn out so well: the British never "had their hearts in the matter." So we're off to Egypt, which offers a better example of "what a liberal empire [can] do." Yet Egypt was no success either. Between 1913 and 1950, Ferguson acknowledges, "Egypt got r[illegible]

as a country" but "the average Egypt- did not"; public health remained ıockingly poor," while infant mor- ity rose. Then there's India, anoth- exception to the purported benefits colonial rule. Ferguson reveals that dia under the Empire suffered from industrialization and economic stag- tion"; massive famines afflicted its ples, who were already burdened th sustaining "one of the world's gest standing armies."

Ferguson plays the counterfactual d to explain the sad state of affairs colonial India. The real problem, posits, was not too much imperial- but too little. If the British com- tted any sins, they were "of omis- n," for India (along with Egypt and en China) would have benefited m tighter colonial control. Here guson commits his own omissions. writes that greater market integra- n could have prevented famines yet regards scholarship that blames star- ion on that very integration. In- d, one of Ferguson's new colleagues Harvard, the Nobel laureate econ- ist Amartya Sen, has shown that dependence from colonial rule ught India's recurrent famines to end, as politicians were now forced ase their actions on public opinion d not on global markets. And when comes to British policy in sub- aran Africa, where misery was high, estment low, and imperial rule any- ng but liberal, Ferguson simply re- ves that card from the deck: *Colos-* all but ignores Britain's abysmal ord in Africa.

For Ferguson, as well as for our do- stic neocons, cherry-picking through past to justify a renewed imperial- is a form of self-absolution. It allows m to celebrate the splendor of em- e while disavowing its legacy, to me the planet's ills on those who st suffer them rather than on those o hold a disproportionate share of planet's power. In trying to under- nd why our world has gone so awry, would perhaps be more useful to nk about history not as analogy but rocess—e.g., how imperial politics d violence or created Third World nomies that are highly susceptible he vicissitudes of the global market. t one would search in vain through *lossus* for, say, a consideration of the repercussions of Washington's support of the mujahedeen in Afghanistan during the 1980s, or of the disastrous effects radical free-market policies have had on the economies of the most vulnerable nations of Southeast Asia and Latin America. In *Empire*, Ferguson at times provided a sober assessment of the consequences of colonial rule, dealing more honestly both with the evils it created (the Atlantic slave trade, for instance) and with the inevitable suffering that accompanied the economic reforms he champions. In *Colossus*, though, such empathy is a casualty of progress, lost in the sweeping arc of history.

Last spring, as the war in Iraq escalated, Ferguson cautioned against viewing the current crisis through the lens of failure in Vietnam. Instead, Ferguson argued in the *New York Times*, the United States needed to confront the Iraqi insurgency with the same "severity," including "punitive village-burning expeditions," used by the British there in 1920. "Fear of the wrong quagmire," he wrote, could result in a "terrible hell."

Wondering what insights the "right quagmire" would provide, I asked Ferguson at a recent public forum whether Washington's track record in Latin America should give pause to those who advocate for an American empire. The United States, after all, often found itself bogged down in unseemly alliances with Latin America's most notorious regimes, relying on repressive paramilitaries to contain dissent. Ferguson generously agreed that Washington's approach to the region has been a disaster. But he went on to say that the United States should have occupied and administered the continent itself instead of shielding its power behind despots. Rather than letting actual, as opposed to virtual, history temper his enthusiasm for empire, Ferguson turns dross into gold, cheerfully arguing that the wreckage created by the United States in Latin America is proof that the problem is not U.S. imperialism but—wait for it—not enough U.S. imperialism.

This response is the one-size-fits-all solution offered by almost every neocon, regardless of the conflict. Donald Kagan, for instance, now considers that the fall of Athens after the Peloponn-



nesian War resulted not from imperial hubris but from Athens' hesitancy to fulfill its imperial mission. For imperialists concerned with matters closer to home, the same reasoning explains more than a century of U.S. failed hemispheric policies. Kagan's son, Robert, who helped execute the Contra war against Nicaragua in the 1980s, believes that the United States has been a prodigal empire in the Americas, wasting its power and money in erratic adventures, reluctant to settle down and assume its workaday responsibilities. Max Boot makes the same case in *The Savage Wars of Peace*, an encomium to the Marine Corps' military prowess—as demonstrated in the Philippines, Mexico, Panama, Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, among other places. The United States did err in Latin America, Boot says, but the mistake was in believing that it could withdraw once the military phase of the operation was over. Boot presents his book as a challenge to the narrow focus of the Powell Doctrine, maintaining that the United States should be willing to intervene militarily throughout the globe and that those interventions should be broad in scope and long in duration. "In deploying American power," he writes, "decision makers should be less apologetic, less hesitant, less humble."

The Western Hemisphere is actually the perfect place to test Ferguson's hypothesis that nations willing to submit to imperial authority would in exchange receive the benefits of stability, investment, and economic growth, because twice in the last century Latin Americans were party to such an arrangement. During the years preceding World War II there was perhaps no region more willing to give up a degree of sovereignty and follow Washington's lead than Latin America. And countries did so not because the United States beat them into submission; on the contrary, after decades of Latin American opposition to U.S. expansion, including protracted guerrilla wars, Washington surrendered its claim to unilateral intervention and began to tolerate economic nationalism. Ferguson, expectedly, denounces this shift in policy as a sign of weakness, even though it created con-

[illegible] racy that entailed political freed[illegible] ter the war, however, as the United States swelled into an imperial power, [illegible] Revolution, Washington's 1954 overthrow of Guatemala's reformist government sent a clear signal that it would not accept social democracy so [illegible] decades, despite nominal support for the continent's "democratic left," the United States would align with the most illiberal and revanchist forces in the hemisphere. The most passionate defenders of democracy, in fact, were likely to be found in the ranks of Washington's opponents—and singled out for execution by Washington's allies.

After the Cold War, Latin America again yielded to U.S. authority. One country after another shook off dictatorships to open their economies to the world market. Governments reduced tariffs, weakened organized labor, privatized national industries, and slashed social spending. But this economic liberalization (of the kind that Ferguson prescribes for the rest of the world) has led not to prosperity but to dismal growth. Wealth inequality is at an all-time high, and poverty is endemic, particularly in relatively well-off countries such as Brazil and Mexico. Direct investment in the region has continued its three-decade decline, even in countries that have followed IMF edicts to the letter, and unbridled financial markets continue to wreak one disaster after another. As popular opposition to Washington's market liberalism again spreads in Bolivia, Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina, the United States has responded by step[illegible] American militaries. Even more worrisome, considering the effort over the last [illegible] Department's call for Latin American [illegible]

Rather [illegible] British hist[illegible]

al American empire would look [illegible] imperialists should take an [illegible] of the region where the U[illegible] States has actually had exten[illegible] imperial experience and ask th[illegible] selves an obvious question: if W[illegible] ington is unable to bring order [illegible] economic growth to Latin Amer[illegible] which falls squarely within its [illegible] backyard and whose population sh[illegible] many of the United States' val[illegible] then how does it hope to do so in [illegible] and the rest of the Middle East? T[illegible] response, no doubt, would be dem[illegible] strative: more imperialism.

Niall Ferguson gives us any n[illegible] ber of alternative pasts f[illegible] which the future can draw [illegible] lessons. Max Boot, by contrast, w[illegible] es that the "past is an uncertain guid[illegible] to the future, but it is the only one [illegible] we have." Both position themselves ag[illegible] st dewy-eyed leftists, who supposedl[illegible] allow their moralistic criticisms of A[illegible] rican power to cloud their judgm[illegible] nt. Yet the refusal of Ferguson and o[illegible] er neo-imperialists to take nationalist[illegible] — the one consistent variable in all t[illegible] ir fast-moving analogies—seriously i[illegible] is as utopian as Charles Fouri[illegible] r's nineteenth-century belief that, u[illegible] er socialism, the seas would lose their [illegible] salt and become "lemonade." Locals, t[illegible] y argue, should be willing to give up [illegible] ve sovereignty for the sake of stability [illegible] nd investment. If not, the United St[illegible] es must steel itself to the task of impo[illegible] ing this arrangement. So we have Fergu[illegible] on rehabilitating MacArthur's plan t[illegible] o nuke China and Boot proposing [illegible] that the United States do in Iraq wha[illegible] t it did between 1898 and 1902 in t[illegible] he Philippines—where Marines tortu[illegible] red thousands, torched communities, [illegible] and herded survivors into concentrat[illegible] ion camps; more than 200,000 died [illegible] in what, according to one British witn[illegible] ess, was not a war but "murderous bu[illegible] tchery." That Boot can call this racist c[illegible] ampaign "one of the most successful co[illegible] unterinsurgencies waged by a Weste[illegible] rn army in modern times" indicates h[illegible] ow successful neoconservatives have b[illegible] een in increasing the public's acceptanc[illegible] e of atrocities committed in the nam[illegible] e of national security, a tolerance that a[illegible] s been on the wane since Vietnam.

Ferguson is more aware of the [illegible] vicious legacy of imperial racism. He

pers his writing with ironic refer-
es to old-school colonialists, sug-
ting our distance from antiquated
ist thinking and the possibility of a
re dispassionate American world
er. But what was Abu Ghraib if not
expression of institutionalized
ism? Military strategists perfected
errogation methods by trolling
ough pop anthropologies to gain
ght into the "Arab mind," working-
ss American recruits understood
ir charges to be "sand niggers," and
ernment functionaries drafted care-
y parsed memos, vetted by lawyers,
lining what is and is not torture
l who is and is not covered by the
neva Conventions.

n her *Origins of Totalitarianism*,
nnah Arendt dubbed British colo-
lists who believed they could main-
n a liberal empire without recourse
acist violence the "quixotic fools of
erialism." Ferguson, who is no fool,
ows that democracy, both in the
tropole and in the colony, under-
nes empire. His celebrated liberal
ase of the British Empire, for ex-
ple, following its initial run of pira-
and slavery, corresponded to a de-
cratization of Britain's domestic
itics. As the kind of violence need-
to maintain foreign rule became a
tter of public debate, the electorate,
en a voting choice, increasingly
ed to pay for social welfare at home
her than empire abroad.

The point of *Colossus* is that the
ited States not only can match
tain's empire but can do empire bet-
. Hence Ferguson's calls for cuts in
ial spending to make for a more des-
rate and therefore more martial
nerican citizenry. But because this
dened society has yet to be forged,
guson, who for hundreds of pages
orts American leaders to show bold
dership, must settle for the role of
rt flatterer, whispering into the em-
or's ear to dissemble, to declare pub-
y his intentions to vacate Iraq while
tively staying. At the end of the
k, Ferguson offers advice to Presi-
nt Bush: "There is in fact a great deal
be said for promising to leave
aq]—provided you do not actually
an it or do it."

Ferguson's easy acceptance of bru-
ity in pursuit of an elusive liberal
pire bears more than a passing re-
semblance to an earlier willingness of Soviet apparatchiks to justify repression in the name of a distant utopia. He has only one response to the inevitable resistance empire provokes: more resolve, which for the otherwise straight talker is a euphemism for more terror, more fear. But terror and fear, as all colonial powers have learned, are useless unless they are thorough and total. If *Colossus* doesn't tell us where the beefed-up political will it calls for may lead us, perhaps an answer can be culled from an earlier imperial storyteller. It was Rudyard Kipling, after all, who wrote in *Kim* that the "Great Game" of imperial intrigue will be finished "when everyone is dead." ■

# THE ANTI-PROFILER

## The verbal burlesque of A. J. Liebling

### *By Lee Siegel*

Discussed in this essay:

*Just Enough Liebling: Classic Work by the Legendary* New Yorker *Writer*, with an introduction by David Remnick. North Point Press, 2004. 534 pages. $27.50.



As a war correspondent for *The New Yorker* magazine during the Second World War, A. J. Liebling once found himself crossing the U-boat-infested Atlantic from England to America in a Norwegian merchant ship. This is a typical passage from the long dispatch he filed after the ship safely reached New Orleans:

> In heavy weather the *Regnbue* steered well only at full speed, and the men at the wheel had an unhappy time from then on. Now and then her bow came clear out of the water—from watching other tankers I could see exactly how it happened—and the sea gave her a ringing slap on the bottom. I felt that this was an impertinence, precisely the sort of thing a German would do if he were running the ocean.

Liebling wrote "Westbound Tanker" in 1942, not long after Pearl Harbor, and at a time when the outcome of the war was unclear. His prose, however, is so closed to the possibility of violence, so negligent of the dangerous circumstances around him, that Liebling might just as well have composed his report after the Allies had triumphed. The possibility of being torpedoed and sunk—men screaming, drowning, burning in the oil-slicked sea—is transformed into a familiar domestic scene. Rather than describe the [illegible] Liebling paints a picture of childhood and motherhood and cozy security. The [illegible]

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tration by Andre Carrilho

calms the nerves, for the sort of thing a German U-boat would have done if it were running the ocean in 1942 would have been to slaughter every non-Aryan or Aryan resister in it. The unspeakable possibility, the ugly reality, is converted into a comforting peacetime image. And yet there is something fundamentally ennobling about Liebling's rhetorical conceit. It refuses to yield to fear, and the Norwegian merchant sailors whom the U-boats would like to kill are portrayed as individuals existing, in all their particularity, outside the context of the war as well as within it.

As this passage from "Westbound Tanker" demonstrates, Liebling was insouciant. The first definition of insouciance is "freedom from concern or care." Poor people want food, shelter, and the basic necessities of life, but they don't expect ever to be free from concern or care; the rich, of course, don't need freedom from anything except from what impinges on their freedom. But freedom from concern or care is precisely what the middle class desires. Although there is a dark side to insouciance—a coldness toward other people's suffering or discomfort—the right kind of insouciance achieves in an attitude or a style what the middle class wishes to attain as a condition for living.

The second definition of insouciance characterizes this attitude as one of "indifference or unconcern esp. to the impression created (as by one's work, conduct, or comportment) on others." Such independent inner ballast is a confidence we associate with the aristocracy. Therefore, insofar as American democracy depends on the middle class for its strength, and on the ideal of the inherent nobility of each individual for its integrity, insouciance is the essential style of the democratic individual in America.

Liebling's great ability was to not care or be concerned about what other people thought, or about what circumstances—e.g., a sea full of German U-boats—were portending. He followed only the arc of his own curiosity through events. He was bent on extracting the human element from his stories, even if he sometimes had to embellish the facts in order to, as it were, highlight the truth. Some critics have found Liebling's portraits of boxing promoters and con men, barbers and lunch-countermen as "Runyonesque." But the colorfulness with which Liebling endowed his subjects was not some dishonest attempt to puff them up into cartoonish grabbing vividness. He was attracted to a quality of uniqueness that he saw latent in people. He conferred on them his own insouciance; they spoke and acted as if Liebling, their interlocutor, wasn't there. Liebling's subjects exist on the page, in Hegel's words, as "free artists of themselves."

> Another respected promoter is Judge Horumph, a bucolic figure of a man who wears a stand-up collar, a heavy gilt-iron watch chain with a seal ring on it, and high, laceless shoes with elastic sides.
>
> The Judge, when he is working, sits at a telephone all day, calling various business houses that like to keep on the good side of the law—particularly firms with large fleets of trucks, because such firms are constantly dealing with traffic and parking summonses, and they don't want to offend anybody. He says, "This is Judge H-r-r-umph." The name is indistinguishable, but no layman knows the names of a tenth of the judges in New York, and it would be impolite to ask a judge to repeat. "I am giving some of my time to a little charitable organization called Free Malted Milk for Unmarried Mothers," the Judge says.

What distinguishes the judge, and Liebling's other ordinary subjects, is that they are self-explanatory; they are not being unmasked by the author. Horumph may indeed be a Runyonesque creation, a con man sprung partly from Liebling's imagination, but you would be hard put nowadays to find such a portrait, in which a man's ulterior motives are evoked without judgment. And maybe such an unfashionable suspension of judgment is one reason why most of Liebling's eighteen books are out of print, and why many of the ones that are available have been published for the most part by small presses: *Between Meals: An Appetite for Paris* (North Point Press); *The Sweet Science: A Ringside View of Boxing* (North Point Press); *The Earl of Louisiana* (Louisiana State University Press); *The Telephone Booth Indian* (Library of Larceny/Broadway Books); *Chicago: The Second City* (Library of Larceny/University of Nebraska Press); *Mollie and Other War Pieces* (Library of Larceny/Broadway Books/University of Nebraska Press); *Just Enough Liebling*—a selection of long excerpts from several of the books—really should have been called *Just Enough Liebling*.

Born Abbott Joseph Liebling to Manhattan's Upper East Side to a prosperous furrier—father merly impoverished Jewish immigrant from Austria—and a Jewish mother from a wealthy San Francisco family, Liebling got expelled from Dartmouth and then enrolled in the Columbia School of Journalism. He worked for several newspapers before joining *The New Yorker* as a staff writer in 1935, staying there until his death in 1963 and enjoying the companionship of, among other *New Yorker* figures, Joseph Mitchell. Together the two of them mastered the art of transcribing everyday lives. But whereas Mitchell proceeded inductively, allowing himself to be slowly inundated by a personality, Liebling proceeded from an idea deductively, excavating what he believed was already there. He was drawn to outsized figures—boxing promoters, Rabelaisian eaters, corrupt Southern politicians—because in his eyes there was nothing outsized about them at all. Their seeming eccentricities were merely the ripening of their innate human originality.

What the two writers shared, though, was the perfection of what might be called the anti-profile. The difference between the people Liebling chose to write about and today's celebrity culture is the difference between the "profile" and the "portrait." A profile is an outline, a concise rendering of the most salient facts, though the facts may be inessential and even inaccurate in their generality. (Think of police "profiling" motorists and pulling over the wrong people.) A literary profile is the verbal equivalent of a drawing, painting, or photograph of just one side of a person, that side he or she wishes to make public. A portrait, on the other hand, is a revelation, an exposure. A portrait aspires to full disclosure; it captures a personality's chiaroscuro, both the revealed as well as the secret places. Celebrities have

filed; ordinary people get portrayed. Then celebrities do get portrayed, y usually threaten to sue.)

The contemporary profile rarely al-s its subject to go on in his or her n words. So readers are presented h carefully controlled and spotless pshots of celebrities or with deli-usly scandalous accounts of ordi-y people who have been tarnished l soiled and reduced to their basest tives. (They then publish books de-ing their ordeal, sell movies based on talk all over the airwaves about it, l also become spotlessly clean—not much spin as spin cycle.) The in-ciant writer, however, has the con-nce to let the subject speak for him-—until the subject hangs himself ll his sordid human splendor. Con-r this passage from a long report, tten by Liebling in 1938, called e Jollity Building," which described inhabitants of a certain edifice sit-ed along Manhattan's Broadway in upper Forties: "chiefly orchestra ders, theatrical agents, bookmakers, l miscellaneous promoters [i.e., con n]." Liebling is describing "a tall esterfieldian old man named Dr. Ti- Heatherington"—the names are bling's fabrications—"president of Anti-Hitlerian League of the West-Hemisphere."

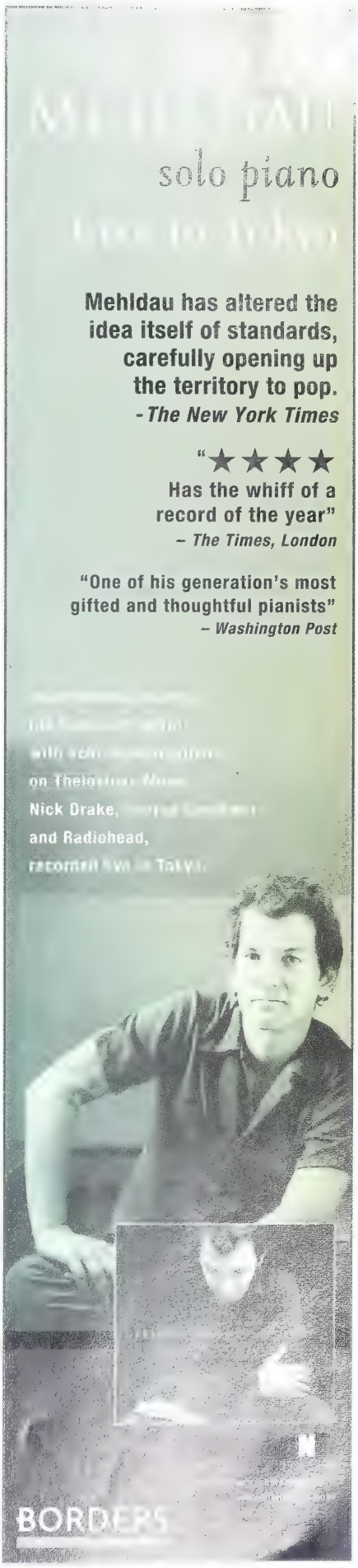
Dr. Heatherington for many years lec-ured in vacant stores on sex topics and old a manual of facts every young man hould know. "The line became, in a manner of speaking, exhausted," Dr. Heatherington says, "because of the in-reasing sophistication of the contem-porary adolescent, so I interested my-elf in this great crusade, in which I listribute at a nominal price a very fas-inating book by Cornelius Vanderbilt, r., and everything in it must be exact-y as stated, because otherwise Hitler ould have sued Mr. Vanderbilt for libel. ncidentally, I sell a lot more books than have for years. I do particularly well at Coney Island."

This mixture of base egotism and f-conscious, high-flown language s Liebling's favorite idiom. Every rsonal trait that fascinated bling is present in Heathering-n's character: the con, the sham, shamelessness of Heathering-n's vocation, along with his re-ircefulness, his charm, and his not unadmirable ambition to advance himself.

For all his no-doubt artful additions, Liebling maintained his balance and never diminished his subject's dignity. As David Remnick puts it in his lovely and loving introduction to *Just Enough Liebling*: "One of the commonplaces of feature writing at the time was a tendency to embroider. That is, there was a lot of making things up or, at the very least, helping things along." (Or, as Liebling once wrote: "A police reporter sees more than he can set down; a feature writer sets down more than he possibly can have seen.") It's hard to tell how much of Heatherington's modest soliloquy was the result of Liebling's ambitions for Heatherington and how much was Heatherington. Whatever the degree of Liebling's "helping things along," Heatherington seems uncannily to possess Liebling's own insouciant style. Rather than "spinning" his subject, Liebling carefully manages the beautiful illusion of a man who, by following his own nature, is immune to being managed.

And so Heatherington reveals himself to Liebling without seeming inhibited in the slightest way by Liebling's presence. Like all Liebling's subjects, this con man is yet another version of the Democratic Everyman, unobstructed and unencumbered by the givens of birth or class, propelled ever forward by ambition, resourcefulness, and curiosity. These qualities send Liebling, in one of his most famous essays, "Quest for Mollie," on a *Saving Private Ryan*–like search through wartorn North Africa for an ordinary American G.I. from a small town called Cokesburg in western Pennsylvania. By the end of Liebling's dispatch, Mollie has become a mythic figure invulnerable to death, capable of great feats of courage and guile, and able to transform himself into any human type for the purposes of disguise. After a while, Mollie begins to sound like an intrepid, high-living, epicurean flaneur; he begins to sound like Liebling, who begins to become obsessed with Mollie. Some American soldiers tell Liebling:

> "When the officers got there they found Mollie was there, and the Frenchmen were all bowing to him and saluting him.



He was dressed so sharp they thought he was an officer, too—maybe a colonel.

"He used to go out scouting with the glasses, all alone, and find the enemy and tip Major Kauffman off where they were. He had a lot of curiosity."

Mollie is the very spirit of insouciance: imaginative, adaptive, capable of reinventing himself whenever opportunity presents an opening to aspiration.

Walter Benjamin once wrote that human perception changed with the advent of the great middle-class boulevards in Paris and Berlin, and Moscow's Nevsky Prospekt—broad, populous thoroughfares along which the observing eye could take in more of public life than ever before. Whether he is interviewing his subjects in an exterior or an interior space, Liebling seems to encounter them along some ultra-wide boulevard, in which he can see their entire aspect. And they, in turn, seem to speak in the same wide space, as if the entire world were their audience. Here is Liebling's favorite con man, a newspaperman who went by the name of Colonel Stingo, talking about one of *his* favorite con men:

"The Rev. Dr. Hall, with whom I was once associated, had a self-exegetic Bible, which he sold for a hundred dollars a copy, but only on the written agreement of the subscriber that it would remain in his personal possession until transmitted to his heir. It was a masterwork superb. I wrote a chapter myself. To be eligible to buy a copy you had to be a graduate of the salon classes for ladies, six lessons for fifty dollars; or of the esatoric course for men, twelve sessions for two hundred and fifty. We sold four hundred and twelve Bibles in the first month of one race meeting at Seattle. The bookmakers made us a proposition to leave town. . . ."

Even an American soldier Liebling encountered in Tunisia in 1943, at the height of the Second World War, demonstrates a striking indifference to his circumstances, though he has just barely survived a German bombing raid from the night before:

"It was these guns that gave away where we were. . . . Only for that they would have gone away and never knowed the first bomb had hit the

[redacted]

again, and now she's got shrapnel holes

"All that work wasted," Heatherington's humorous "because otherwise Hitler could have stuck" [redacted] the things people say when they're not worried about who might or might not be listening, a bursting of the ego through the urbane, ironic, refined gossamer skin of Liebling's prose.

Liebling liked this small disclosure of ego. What he didn't like was big egos strutting around, brandishing their entitlements, harboring a sense of worth out of all proportion to their true merit. He liked to portray con men perhaps because their egos are buried in a performance of humility and even, sometimes, self-abasement. The con man is able to con because his submergence of ego is a relief in a world brimming with abusive vanity. You are almost willing to pay the price of being tricked for the satisfaction of being respected. And, to be convincing, the con man has to be sharply aware that he is wallowing in moral squalor even as he is going through the process of getting what he wants. Thus the vice of (successfully) conning someone has the asset of self-knowledge more fully than most other occupations—and that is, as we know, a timeless virtue.

In this sense, a flim-flam with a virtuous outcome is a rare type of heroism. That is why Liebling so admired Huey Long, the populist governor of Louisiana [redacted] of Long's demagoguery, corruption, and [redacted] was assassinated [redacted] state capitol building, he was rumored to have assembled a private army). Liebling's long set of essays on Earl Long [redacted] also became [redacted] and who shared Huey's nature, is a permanent literar[redacted] Here is Liebling

[redacted] friend of his on the subject [redacted] Earl, as Liebling and his friend [redacted] having dinner in a New Orlean[redacted] restaurant in 1960, four years [redacted] the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

"Earl is like Huey on Negroes," [redacted] said. "When the new Charity Hospital was built here, some Negro politicians came to Huey and said it was a sin there were no Negro nurses, [redacted] more than half the patients were [redacted] Huey said he'd fix it for them, but they wouldn't like his method. He went around to visit the hospital and pretended to be surprised when he found white nurses waiting on colored men. He blew high as a buzzard, flatly saying it wasn't fit for white [redacted] to be so humiliated. It was the most racist talk you ever heard, but the result was he got the white nurses out and the colored nurses in, and they've had the jobs ever since."

This beautifully told story was no doubt "helped along" by Liebling, who was thus conning readers for the good purpose of instilling in them the spirit of this anecdote about Long's deceitfulness in the service of good purposes.

And yet Liebling distilled every gently the universal fact of appetite, and selfishness, in greed out of the people and milieus he encountered. This tasteful declaration was the necessary caricature of reporting that all reporting, and especially literary reporting, is. In a 1962 piece about Muhammad Ali, who was then still Cassius Clay, Liebling deftly portrays the poetizing young boxer and his trainer, Angelo Dundee. He let the latter speak a little about Clay's training and his special qualities as a boxer. And then:

He [Dundee] added that Clay, as a business enterprise, was owned and operated by a syndicate of ten leading citizens of Louisville, mostly distillers. They had given the boy a bonus of ten thousand dollars for signing up, and paid him a monthly allowance and his training expenses whether he fought or not—a research fellowship. In return, they got half his earnings when he had any.

Whereas Dundee as Liebling's subject suddenly discloses the bright

*Continued on page*

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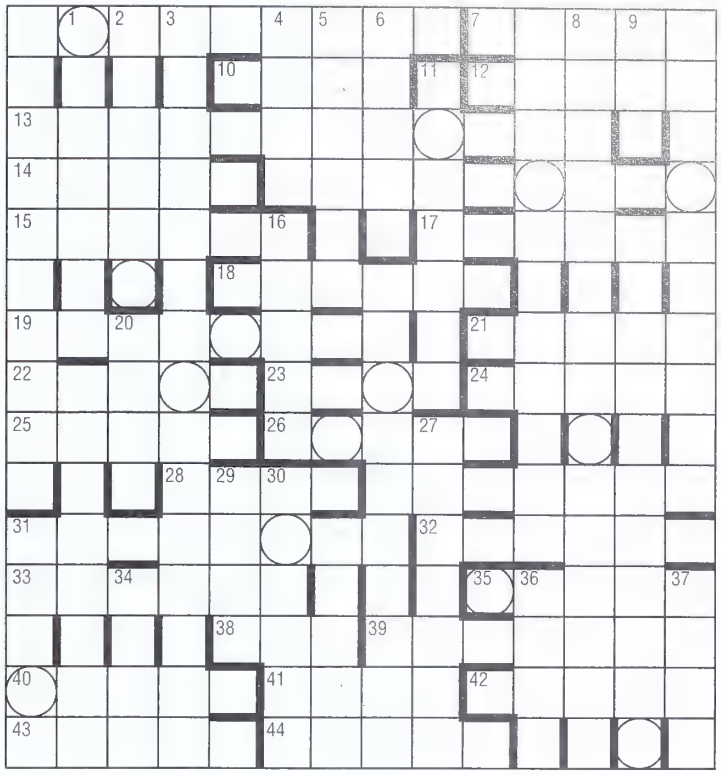
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from page 96

[illegible] his ego, Liebling the insouciantist [illegible] ritor exposes an all-encompassing [illegible] versal selfishness, which is the [illegible] dark side, and is far more powerful than the individual. This subtle [illegible] spectful, simultaneously fang-exposing and gently detanging comedy [illegible] the essence of Liebling's prose. [illegible] plains his liking for fancy-sounding language that both conceals and expresses low impulses, a type of verbal burlesque that itself recalls the [illegible] formal badinage of one of the [illegible] insouciants of all time: W. C. Fields. A slow, sly laughter, after all, is [illegible] only sane response to destiny's [illegible] sant ringing slaps.



# Three's a Charm

*By Richard E. Maltby Jr.*

The eleven unclued diagram entries have something in common. Their common element will appear in the circled letters, reading left to right.

Clue answers include four proper names. 19A is uncommon. As always, mental re-punctuation is the key to deciphering the clues. The solution to last month's puzzle appears on page 77.

ACROSS

7. Like, snap, shaking food (5)
10. Small pale white bird (4)
12. Roves all around on publisher's backside! (5)
13. LED screen and pen combined—it's dazzling (12)
14. Trouble relating to worship (5)
15. Giving out, left during murder—good (6)
17. Having greatest opportunity to decompose, fester (6)
18. Outdoorsy, having runners? (6)
19. Certain tars I arrested smuggling Italian mosaics (8)
21. *Killing Fields*, added to any Loew's, initially (5)
22. After a listen, appraise pop singer (5)
23. Pitch up to team's opener (4)
24. Tired from putting a thing in tree, endlessly (5)
25. Female involved in a bribe and stick-up? (5)
26. Cleave and leave (5)
28. Amazon environmentalists' holding area (4)
32. Commencement reveals alien as gay? (6)
33. A Catholic idiosyncrasy from a Pole? (6)
35. Biblically, is able to preserve saint (5)
38. Main idea: losing driver's license, e.g., after Sunday (3)
39. Bug catches covert Seal in a lie (7)
40. Octet and duet or quartet part (5)
41. Discharge—it's not workable (4)
42. You and I take in one's first feature of recipe: more sage (5)
43. Perfect places for dense dumbell (5)
44. Strained turnip top, chopped (5)

DOWN

1. Woodhen's awkward dance (7)
2. It supports fashionable black music, they say (6)
3. *Trivia Zone, Part I* grouping: defederalizing again (15)
4. Blows away in a direction that's inconclusive (4)
5. Front of awning switched, nearing the end (6)
6. British spy and religious leader heading east (5)
8. Mannerism messes up one's interests (15)
9. Belief is the end of Islam (3)
11. Ducks when beef is thrown into water (7)
16. Bravery on receiving small blows (5)
20. Spat on floor, starting time provided up front (4)
27. Seal off one very deceased (7)
29. Man whose career had its ups and downs? Oh, it is poetic (4)
30. Insect swarms—most agreeable (6)
31. Actors in speech class (5)
34. A solid individual supporting city leadership (4)
36. When one's turned up among ex-drinkers, it's big! (4)
37. Novice removed from sexuality, romance (4)

**Contest Rules:** Send completed diagram with name and address to "Three's a Charm," *Harper's Magazine*, [illegible] York, N.Y. 10012. If you already subscribe to *Harper's*, please include a copy of your latest mailing label. Entries must be received by December 8. Senders of the first three correct solutions opened at random will receive one year subscription to *Harper's Magazine*; names will be printed in the February issue. Winners of the October puzzle, "Bad Luck," are Madeline Cook, Milledgeville, Georgia; Nancy W. Reifenstein, Harvard, Massachusetts; and Brenda Brody, Guilford, Connecticut.

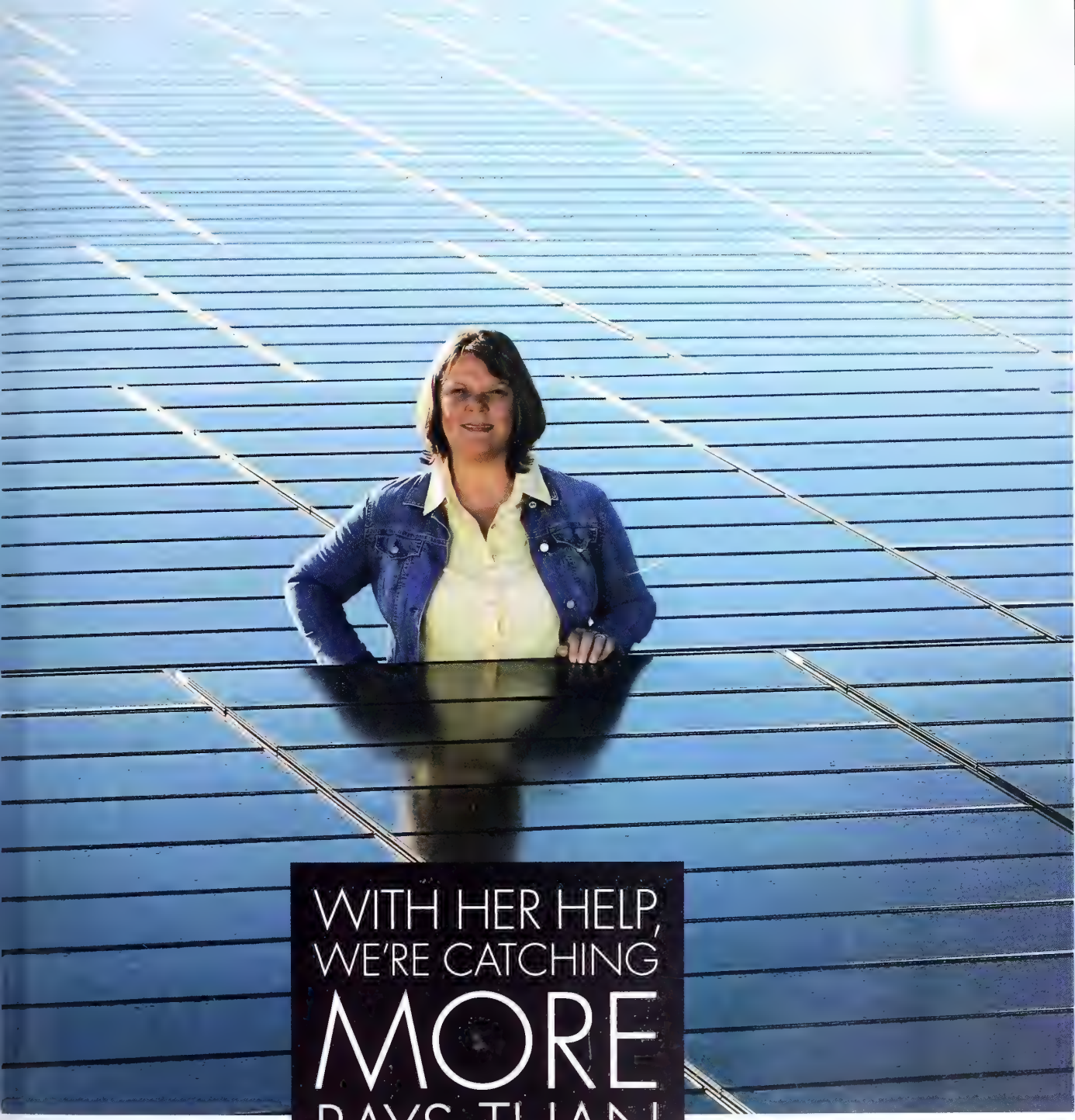


# FINDINGS

Scientists at the University of Washington were planning to infect monkeys with a replica of the 1918 pandemic flu virus in an attempt to understand why it was so deadly. Critics were worried that the virus might escape into the wild. Thai health officials confirmed that avian flu has probably begun to spread from person to person, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that more than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized each year because of influenza, which is almost twice the previous estimate. The discovery that methane and water vapor are concentrated together on Mars suggested that methane-producing bacteria may be present on the planet. A group of Australian scientists developed a vaccine to cut down on the methane emitted by sheep when they belch and fart. Scientists were developing a spaceship engine powered by sound waves. Researchers in Austria were using bacterial "ghosts" to make pesticides adhere to plants, and neuroscientists were hoping to use rat brain waves to find people buried by earthquakes. It was discovered that some dogs can smell bladder cancer.

The British Food Standards Agency warned that lobsters, cockles, and scallops taken from the waters northwest of England are so contaminated with plutonium that they will exceed United Nations limits scheduled to take effect next year. Scientists were investigating the appearance, near two wastewater discharge pipes, of hermaphrodite fish in Colorado's South Platte River. Scientists said that the number of endangered species could be 50 percent higher than previously thought. The Global Amphibian Assessment announced that about one third of all known species of amphibians are endangered. Nine species have died out since 1980, and 113 have not been seen in recent years. Carbon-dioxide levels were rising faster than ever, and mussels were found growing 800 miles from the North Pole.

Paleontologists in China discovered 130-million-year-old fossils of Dilong paradoxus, an ancestor of *Tyrannosaurus rex*, with impressions of feathers all over its body; another fossilized dinosaur (named *Mei long*, or "soundly sleeping dragon") was found that appeared to have been sleeping with its head tucked under its wing like a bird. A giant virus was discovered that is as big as a small bacterium and may be an entirely new form of life. Scientists succeeded in cultivating square salt-loving bacteria called Walsby's square archaeon. Two new AIDS vaccines failed to work. The genome of a Hereford cow was sequenced. Cone snails, it was found, catch fish by firing a hollow poison tooth through a long proboscis. Chinese scientists unveiled a microscopic swimming robot that they said could be used someday to deliver drugs or to clear clogged arteries, and Korean and Italian researchers developed a tiny robot with multiple legs designed to crawl through a patient's guts. Scientists with NIZO Food Research developed an artificial throat that breathes, salivates, and swallows. A new study found that injecting mice with embryonic stem cells can partially correct congenital heart defects in their babies. Another study suggested that vitamin supplements could increase the risk of dying from cancer. Japanese surgeons gave a burn victim a new face made from a single sheet of skin taken from his back. A quadriplegic man succeeded in checking email and playing computer games via a microchip embedded in his brain. American researchers developed a device that uses spinach to generate electricity. Canadian researchers claimed to have developed a cure for the common cold. California banned necrophilia. Volcanic ash rained down on Tokyo. ■



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